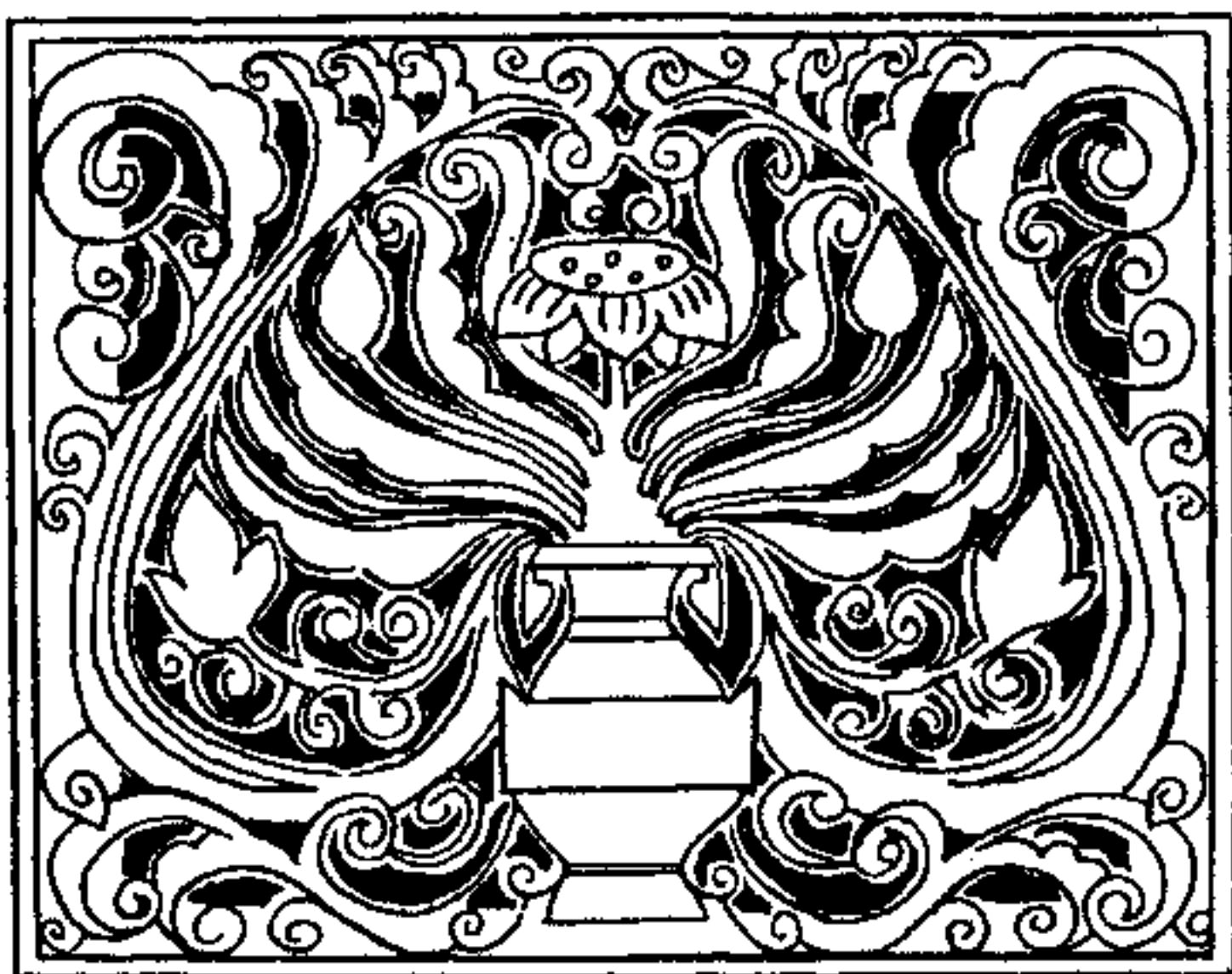




PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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OCTOBER 1998

CONTENTS

The New President of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission... .. opp.	569
Divine Wisdom	569
Fixing the Mind on God - IX (Editorial)	570
Strive for Harmony and Concord Swami Ranganathananda	573
The Centenary of the Ramakrishna Mission - Concluding Function at New Delhi. Swami Gahanananda	580
Mundaka Upanishad Swami Sridharananda	583

Continued on the next page

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The Temple <i>Ms. Sujatha Padmanabhan</i> 606	Reviews and Notices 614
	News and Reports 616

उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED

Vol. 103

OCTOBER 1998

No. 10

Divine Wisdom

(SURUCHI'S ADVICE TO DHRUVA)

सत्यं सुरुच्याभिहितं भवान्मे
यद् दुर्भगाया उदरे गृहीतः।
स्तन्येन वृद्धश्च विलज्जते
यां भार्येति वा वोढुमिडस्पतिमाम्॥

What Suruchi said was right; for you were born in me and nourished by me — an unfortunate creature whom the king is ashamed to admit as wife or even as a hand-maid.

आतिष्ठ तत्तात विमत्सरस्त्वमुक्तं
समात्रापि यदव्यलीकम्।
आराधयाधोक्षजपादपद्मं
यदीच्छसेऽध्यासनमुत्तमो यथा॥

Dear one! Accept without any ill-will the advice given to you, even though it be

from the co-wife of your mother. Worship the Supreme Lord Mahavishnu, if you desire to be seated in the king's lap even like Uttama.

यस्याङ्घ्रिपद्मं परिचर्य
विश्वविभावनायात्तगुणाभिपत्तेः।
अजोऽध्यतिष्ठत् खलु पारमेष्ठ्यं पदं
जितात्मश्वसनाभिवन्द्यम्॥

It is by the service of Mahavishnu, who has assumed a *Sattvika* form for the purpose of protection of the worlds, that Brahma has come to occupy the Satyaloka, which even yogis with perfect self-control aspire to gain.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, 4.8.18-20

Fixing the Mind on God - IX

In the last month's editorial we came across the instruction of Sri Ramakrishna: 'The thing is *somehow* to unite the mind with God. You must not forget Him, not even once. Your thought of Him should be like the flow of oil, without any interruption.'¹ He says that if God is worshipped *even in a brick or stone*, then through His grace one can see Him. The Holy Mother too said something quite similar: 'People say "God, God"; one can have God-realization even if one can see God in it (pointing to a peg in the verandah).'² Speaking on the use of symbols in Bhakti Yoga and drawing a distinction between the worship of God and the worship of symbols, Swami Vivekananda says³:

We may worship anything by seeing God *in* it, if we can forget the idol and see God there. We must not project any image upon God. But we may fill any image with that Life which is God. Only forget the image, and you are right enough — for 'Out of Him comes everything.' He is everything. We may worship a picture as God [i.e. seeing God in the picture], but not God as the picture [i.e., projecting the picture on God]. God in the picture is right, but the picture as God [i.e. picture projected on God] is wrong. God *in* the image is perfectly right. There is no danger there. This is the real worship of God. But the image-God is a mere *Pratika*⁴.

In the final analysis, everything in this world is merely a superimposition on Brahman; therefore, everything is viewed correctly when seen as Brahman. It is only our ignorance which veils the correct perception. True worship is not to project any more images but to see God in the images of God that already exist; we are required to pierce the veil that makes God appear as the image and see God therein. Spiritual practice is aimed at regaining the correct perception of God in the manifest world and that is what the *Īśa-Upaniṣad* too, in its very first sloka, advocates: viewing the world as permeated with the Cosmic Spirit. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* (II.iii.1) too says:

*Dve vāva brahmaṇo rūpe —
mūrte caivāmūrte ca, martyaṁ cāmṛtaṁ ca,
sthitaṁ ca yacca, sacca tyacca.*

Brahman has but two forms — gross and subtle, mortal and immortal, limited and unlimited, defined and undefined.

In commenting on this sloka it has been said that through the superimposition of the formless Supreme Brahman by ignorance, Brahman becomes defined or conceivable in two forms: gross, i.e., limited and hence mortal (fire, water and earth), and subtle, i.e. unlimited or pervasive, and hence immortal (ether and air). So, the gross and subtle manifestations as ourselves and the world around us is of the Supreme Brahman.

Towards the end of the *Īśa-Upaniṣad* it reads (slokas 15–16):

The face of the Truth lies hidden under thy golden orb. Do thou, O Sun, open that so that I who am devoted to Truth alone, may see It. O, thou, who are the nourisher, the solitary traveller, the controller, the acquirer, the son of Prajapati, do contract thy rays, do gather up thy dazzle. *I shall behold that form of thine which is the*

1. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1994), pp. 431–2. [Hereafter *Gospel*.]

2. Brahmachari Akshayachaitanya, *Sri Sri Sarada Devi* (Calcutta: Bhattacharya Sons Limited, B.S. 1344), p. 209.

3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, vols. 1 to 8, 1989; vol. 9, 1997), vol. 4, p. 47. [Hereafter *CW*.]

4. 'Nearing-stage', *CW*, vol. 4, p. 42.

most blessed. I am indeed He, that Person, who dwells there (in the Sun).

In Vedic times, one used to meditate upon Brahman as residing in the sun, the heart and the eyes. Though Brahman is all-pervading, yet in these places It has a greater manifestation. So, when the mind is held on any one of these places with a view to perceiving that Light of Consciousness, Brahman is more easily realized. Though the sun, being the illuminer, is symbolic of Knowledge, the glaring light of the sun does not allow us to see it with the naked eye. We need the light of the sun or other derived illuminations to see objects, but to see the sun which is the source of light and life, its glaring light comes in the way. So the prayer issues forth asking the sun to gather up its rays, to open that 'golden orb' which conceals it from us, to enable us to behold that form of it which is 'most blessed', since '*I am that very Person who dwells there*'.

This approach really applies to everything else in the universe. Truth is hidden from our view through ignorance, and the prayer, and therefore the attempt, is to see one's Self immanent in those manifold forms. This attempt has to be made consciously and persistently. A constant attitude should be, '*I shall behold that form of thine which is the most blessed. I am that very Person who dwells in thee.*'

The Hindus are generally blamed for worshipping God in images. It is easy for some minds to perform such a worship, for it helps to fix the mind on the Deity. But those who go through the principles underlying image-worship, will not fail to notice that it is God who is being worshipped and not the image. Sri Ramakrishna asks very pertinent questions and makes some interesting observations which form the basis for the worship of God in man: 'If God can be worshipped in images, can He not be worshipped in man?', 'If one can meditate on God with eyes closed, can one not meditate on God with eyes open?' 'Can a puny crea-

ture like man ever help another? He can only serve God in them.' In last month's editorial we mentioned how a lady devotee attained even *bhāvasamādhi* through worshipping Gopala in her nephew.

This is the need of the age — a better interpersonal relationship than normally obtains in the world. The world is so full of persons who like to hurt others for the sadistic pleasure they derive therefrom. There are also many who would not hesitate to injure others if it will serve their own interests.⁵ These categories of persons have been classified by Bhartrihari as the unnameable and the monstrous respectively. They are not human yet though they appear to be so in form, and they find it difficult, even by mistake, to think of doing good to others. They may place their feet on the first rung of the ladder of spiritual progress by trying hard to do some good to others so long as it does not clash with their self-interest. Such belong to the third category — ordinary men. Even 'ordinary' men have to progress by stepping on to the next rung of the ladder — doing good to others without any thought for their own interests. Such men are called 'good people' by Bhartrihari. That is how

5. *Ete satpuruṣāḥ parārthaghatākāḥ
svārtham parityajya ye
sāmānyāstu parārthamudyamabhyūtaḥ
svārthāvirodhena ye;
Te'nū mānuṣarākṣasāḥ parahitāḥ
svārthāya nighnanti ye
ye tu ghnanti nirarthakam parahitāḥ
te ke na jānīmahe.*

—Nītiśatakam, 74.

Those men are good men who accomplish the good of others disregarding their own; those are ordinary men who devote themselves to do good to others in a manner as not to clash with their own interests; those are monsters in human form who destroy the good of others for their own profit. However, we do not know what to call those who aimlessly cause injury to another's prospects.

difficult it is to become eligible to be called 'good people'.

This is not the end of progress; this only makes men good. Such persons believe in doing good to the embodied beings in need. But what is the attitude with which they do good? It could be pure and simple humanism without any higher direction. 'Thy need is greater than mine' is a good attitude which issues from a good and noble heart that feels for the other in distress. However, to go up further on the ladder, we must couple with it a higher attitude and that is to serve the embodied *jiva* with the attitude that one is worshipping God: *Śiva-jñāne jīva-sevā*. In this attitude there is both the idea that one is serving a *jiva* (the idea that a *jiva* in need of service is there before one) and that one is worshipping God (the idea that there is God in the *jiva* is also superimposed by effort). It is a repeated attempt to focus our attention on the Divine in the served just as one attempts repeatedly to fix the mind on the divine seated in one's own heart. The ignorant, the ill-clad, the sick, the down-trodden are the forms in which the Divine is appearing before us and, obviously, we cannot at the very outset form the idea that in and through these forms what greets us is the Divine.

Let us recall to our mind three instances in which Sri Ramakrishna highlights the idea that it is God who is worshipped in the image and not the image. When one does not remember that, confusion results from the worship of images. Even so is there confusion when one tries to worship God in man without stressing the right insight.

Consider the breaking of the image of Radha-Govinda. A broken image cannot be worshipped, according to scriptural injunctions. But the breaking of the image does not mean that God, the Indivisible, is broken. That would be absurd. So, Sri Ramakrishna, also holding that God is one's own, suggests that the image be repaired (as one would treat one's near relative) and then wor-

shipped. Confusion would not arise if one remembers that Sacchidananda who receives worship is not broken; only the image is broken. One who habitually remembers this idea will have no question as to how God can be worshipped in man who is full of limitations which make him human.

Again, we see that Mathur Babu finds it difficult to accept that the image of Sri Durga whom he worshipped for three days with devotion was to be immersed in water. He would not allow that! Sri Ramakrishna explains in a very convincing manner that the Divine Mother who had all along been accepting his worship seated in the heart, had for a time been worshipped in the image, that after the immersion ceremony She will continue to receive his worship seated in his heart. This again is a call to man to have the right attitude: it is God who is worshipped and not the image, that God is seated in the heart of all.

To many the worship is of images. It, therefore, becomes a mechanical exercise. To Sri Ramakrishna however, it raised many oppressive questions which never bother us: Whether his Divine Mother was *actually* in the image; and, if She were there, then *why does She not reveal Herself to him*. This focus and thrust took Sri Ramakrishna to wonderful realizations, that the Divine Mother did really exist, that She accepted his offerings, that She breathed, that She was not material but Consciousness and hence did not cast a shadow on the wall, that transcending the image She even moved about and talked with him! Thus, we need to have this orientation which Sri Ramakrishna ever had on seeing images and people, while we are serving God in man.

When one progresses further, then one will perform *Śiva-pūjā* worship of God; the attention to His manifold forms would have disappeared. The idea is to raise man to this perception of Truth, that it is God who has become all these that we see in and around

(Continued on page 588)

Strive for Harmony and Concord^{*}

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

While consecrating the Universal Sri Ramakrishna Temple at Madurai on 13 March 1998, Revered Maharaj described the Holy Trio as 'a tremendous source of strength, fearlessness and harmony among communities and groups in society'. The West has made long strides in science. What India has to offer to the world is scientific insight into the depth dimension of man, which Western science sadly lacks. This higher knowledge, coupled with Western science, gives modern man tremendous possibilities for understanding the divinity innate in man. This divine essence in man, and not the body-mind complex, is the source of human values which humanity the world over is desperately searching for. Drawing a reference to the Srimad Bhagavatam, Revered Maharaj highlights the need to combine worship in images with service to God in man by trying to remove their earthly wants (dāna) with due respect for the served (māna) through an attitude of friendship (maitryā) and with an eye of non-separateness (abhinnena cakṣuṣā). Revered Maharaj cites a few examples from the life of Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother which indicate how they, by their life incidents, set a model before modern man. The teachings of Swami Vivekananda, says Revered Maharaj, have to be widely disseminated, especially the message of tyāga (renunciation) and sevā (service) through which alone we can rebuild the nation.

The consecration of the Sri Ramakrishna Temple today is a grand event in this great city of Madurai. And hundreds and hundreds of people have come here to participate in today's function. In history, Madurai holds a great place. It is a place of culture, a place which has seen great saints coming in and going out, and we have the great Meenakshi Temple, a temple of the Divine Mother. Here flourished the Pandian Kingdom long ago. Two thousand years' history is behind us in this city.

In modern times, we have so many conflicting forces working within our nation. Even today there are so many conflicting forces. Caste, religious communities, and various socio-economic levels — all these

have been in conflict with each other. Today we need a message of harmony, of concord. That was India's great message in the past. Now we need to repeat it once again to create harmony in our society. When you deal with Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, and Swami Vivekananda, you are dealing with a tremendous source of strength, fearlessness, and harmony among communities and groups in the society. It is a wonderful idea. In very ancient times we first developed this idea of harmony in the realm of religion. In the *Rig-Veda*, humanity's oldest book, our sages have in very ancient times proclaimed this great truth and Vivekananda calls it the sheet anchor of India's culture and of her history of thousands of years. That truth is: *Ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti* — Truth is one, sages call it by various names'.

This wonderful teaching has penetrated the minds and hearts of our people, including all political states both big and small. That is why this land became the land of harmony. Various religious groups lived

^{*} Based upon the cassette record of the public lecture given by Srimat Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, on the occasion of the consecration of the Universal Sri Ramakrishna Temple in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India, on 13 March 1998, and duly edited by the speaker.

together in harmony and one of the greatest expressions of this spirit of harmony came in the 3rd century BC from the great Mauryan Emperor Ashoka. On various rocks and pillars he gave his message of a spiritual development of humanity, moral development of society, and harmony among religions. One of his famous inscriptions on a rock you can read by the side of the road to Junagadh in Saurashtra even today. You will find his wonderful statement, 'When you love your own religion and hate other religions, you do harm to your own religion. For in religion, harmony, concord is the right way.' What a clear presentation of the spirit of Indian culture! The exact text is: *Samavāya eva sādhuḥ. Samavāya* — harmony and concord alone is correct in the world of religion. Swami Vivekananda referred to this wonderful quality of Indian culture when he spoke at the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893 on the opening day itself:

I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance.¹

He said that people who came as refugees in India — the Parsis from Iran, the Jews from Palestine — all were welcomed. They were given full protection all through history. They had suffered harassment and ill-treatment in their own countries very much — especially in western countries. I was speaking in Warsaw, the capital of Poland, during my four-months' European tour in 1961. The subject was: The Spirit of Indian Culture. There was a distinguished gathering and the Indian ambassador was with me. I referred to this quality of Indian culture and harmony, how it welcomed Jews who came from Palestine to India to escape Roman tyranny and settled here. They were protected throughout history. So also the Parsis. When I was returning home, the ambassador told me, 'You have done a wonderful

work. The audience were mostly communists, and most of them are Jews. They will be happy to know that though they were persecuted all over Europe, from India they received only kindness and compassion.' That is a wonderful truth from history.

In this modern period, we experience a certain strife taking place in India in the name of religion. To forestall it and completely overcome it, India produced a Sri Ramakrishna who practised various religions and found that the same truth comes through every religion. *Yato math tato path* — he put it in Bengali — 'As many religions, so many pathways to God'. That is a wonderful teaching emphasizing once again the very ancient *Rig-Vedic* utterance *ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti*. The Holy Mother, Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, and later on Mahatma Gandhi, all of them emphasized this great truth of harmony in this world of religion.

But we in India today need to understand something more. In India, the science, yes, the science of religion, had achieved tremendous development. The modern West has developed the physical sciences wonderfully, investigating into the depth dimension of matter, into the real nature of the perishable aspect of nature. This advance of physical science has also seen the decline of dogmatic religion in the West. Probing deep into matter, physics has discovered its nuclear dimension. From molecules to atoms, from atoms to nuclear particles. At the particle level, physics has been confronted by a strange phenomenon: observation changes the nuclear phenomenon; as the physicists put it: nature is destroyed by observation. This has made one nuclear scientist, John Archibald Wheeler, say that we have to use the word *participator* in place of observer. If an object is changed by observation, the question what is the nature of that observer or the subject, becomes relevant. Western science has not touched even a fringe of this profound theme but keeps on

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 1, p. 3. [Hereafter C.W.]

probing matter—the object—, and projecting materialism as its philosophy and providing more and more consumer goods through its technology. But a handful of nuclear scientists like Schroedinger hold the importance of spirituality and often quote from our Indian philosophy and spirituality of Vedanta.

In the field of modern biology, evolution at the human stage has begun to raise questions as to the nature and goal of human evolution and the need for human discipline in moral, ethical, and humanistic values. Physical sciences do not know the source of these values. 'Science can denature plutonium, but science cannot denature evil in the heart of man', declared Albert Einstein. Biology or its genes are not their source, says modern biology itself. Richard Dawkins, a British biologist, has written a book with the arresting title: *The Selfish Gene*. He says in it that he is a materialist but insists that children must be taught moral and ethical values; but he does not know the source of these values. Vedanta alone knows the source of all these values, namely, the Atman, the infinite Self within everyone. Over four thousand years before Darwin, India discovered that the universe and all living beings in it are the product of an evolutionary process from not a piece of dense matter, as Western astrophysics proclaims today, but from Pure Consciousness, infinite and non-dual, which lay hidden in the cosmic stage of evolution but which began to unfold steadily when evolution rose to the organic level. From then on, Indian view of evolution holds that as the organism evolves, consciousness manifests more and more. It is evolution of structure and manifestation of consciousness. This process has reached its highest level at the human stage where evolution has ceased to be organic and risen to the spiritual level. All values are spiritual, says Vedanta.

Human beings need to manifest values in their life and inter-human relations, if

evolution at the human stage is to progress in the right direction. For this nobody has to beg or borrow values from others, says Vedanta. They have their source within themselves; they have only to manifest them in life and action. Without this value-orientation, human life — individual and social — becomes 'short, nasty, and brutish', to use an expression by the early British thinker, Thomas Hobbes. That is the importance of the science of values. *And Vedanta holds that the science of values is the essential link between the physical sciences and the science of spirituality.*

The British biologist, Sir Julian Huxley, has stated that, in the West, the study of the mind has just begun; but that study is still controlled by the dogma of materialism; it speaks of the brain manifesting the mind and the mind manifesting the self! Huxley has, however, said that we have to develop a new science and he calls it *the science of human possibilities*. It is this science that ancient India developed in the Upanishads and has continued to nurture it till today in Sri Ramakrishna. To a question by a student to teach him that by knowing which all this manifested universe can be known — *kasmin nu bhagavo vijñāte sarvam idam vijñātam bhavati* — the *Mundaka Upanishad* reports the teacher's answer that there are two sciences to be known by a human being, namely, *aparā vidyā*, lower science, consisting of the knowledge of the perishable world revealed by the senses, and *parā vidyā*, higher science, by which the Imperishable Reality is realized. It is that *parā vidyā* that Sri Ramakrishna represented in India in the modern age.

The Western world will slowly learn, in the course of the emerging twenty-first century, about that *parā vidyā*, or higher science, in continuation of the *aparā vidyā*, or ordinary science, that the West has developed remarkably during the last four centuries. That higher science India developed as Vedanta in the Upanishads over 4000 years ago

by investigating into the depth dimension of the observer, the ego or the self. This unique datum appears in evolution at the human stage only and modern neurologists tell us that it is this new datum that made the human being dominate all other species of evolution. A youth of 8 or 10 can control a horse or elephant. Here is the great Vedanta philosophy and spirituality which has penetrated to the depth dimension of this unique datum and discovered its infinite and immortal dimension, the Atman or Brahman. The sages of the Upanishads realized this great 'Truth of all truths', *satyasya satyam*, and proclaimed it to the whole world — *vedāhametaṁ puruṣaṁ mahāntaṁ* — 'I have realized this infinite man behind the finite man'. The sages, in search of the Imperishable behind the perishable, discovered that there is the immortal divine spark in every human being and that the human being has also the organic capacity to realize it. Vedanta speaks of the most supreme human uniqueness arising from his or her capacity to realize Brahman, the One infinite source of the universe, *brahmāvaloka dhiṣaṇam*, as the *Srimad Bhagavatam* (XI.9.28) expresses it.

Nowhere else you will find this kind of a scientific investigation into the depth dimension of man. It is beyond the physical, sensory, and psychic dimensions of human nature; and the truth that the sages discovered and proclaimed was that human beings are *amṛtasya putrāḥ*, 'Children of Immortality', as Swami Vivekananda proclaimed in the Chicago World Parliament of Religions of 1893, quoting a verse from the *Svetasvatara Upanishad*. It is the manifestation of the Infinite non-dual Consciousness, Brahman, the one source of the universe and man, the One behind the many, as referred to earlier.

The *Taittiriya Upanishad* proclaims: *Brahmavid āpnoti param* — 'The knower of Brahman attains the Supreme'. What is the nature of that Brahman? The Upanishad answers: *Satyam, Jñānam, Anantaṁ Brahma* —

'Brahman is Truth, Pure Intelligence or Consciousness, and Infinity'. And the Upanishad defines Brahman in a great sentence: *Yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante, yena jālāni jīvanti, yat prayanti abhisamviśanti* — 'That Pure Infinite Consciousness from which all this universe of beings is born, in which, being born, they exist, and into which they eventually merge (at the end of a cosmic cycle)'. The manifestation of the multifarious universe from Brahman is the result of Brahman as if saying to Itself: *eko'ham bahusyām* — 'I am One, let Me be many', say the Upanishads. The background material of Western astrophysics, the state of singularity, exploded in a big bang which commenced the evolution of the universe. Being dull dead matter, how could it time the Big Bang? There is no answer. British astronomer Fred Hoyle's new book, *The Intelligent Universe*, brings Western astrophysics closer to ancient Vedanta. Brahman, being Infinite Pure Consciousness, is described by the *Gita* as *avibhaktaṁ vibhakteṣu vibhaktaṁ iva ca sthitaṁ* — 'existing undivided in things apparently divided'. In the words of nuclear scientist Schroedinger in his book *What is Life?*, 'Consciousness is a singular of which the plural is unknown.'

This truth of the innate divinity of all beings, is repeated in the *Gita*, and in modern times by Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and the Holy Mother. That divinity lies hidden in every human being. No distinction of high and low, caste, creed or race. You may always have difference in society but there will be no conflict. There will be understanding and harmony. That is what India will contribute to modern humanity in India and in the world at large. And this modern age has a tremendous possibility: along with the Western physical sciences, India contributing this *parā vidyā*, or higher science, the science of spirituality, through Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and the Holy Mother. In his *Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, Romain Rolland, the French

biographer of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, describes both in his Preface itself as 'the splendid symphony of the Universal Soul'.

We have several wonderful scriptures, *Srimad Bhagavatam*, for example: it is a very holy book in which a Divine Incarnation tells us (III.29.24), 'Don't worship Me in an image in a temple, if you insult Me in human beings; I will not accept that worship.' This comes in a series of verses expounding human uniqueness, in the third book of *Srimad Bhagavatam*. That was the wrong we in India did in the past centuries. We insulted God in man and worshipped Him only in the temple. So nothing happened to us except political slavery and foreign invasions. Now we have learnt a lesson. All this distinction of caste and creed must be abolished. Respect every human being, the divinity hidden within all. Among the verses in the *Srimad Bhagavatam* referred to above in its third book, God, in His incarnation as Kapila, gives this advice to Devahuti (III.29.27), his mother. Here is that famous verse:

*Atha mām sarvabhūteṣu
bhūtātmanāṁ kṛtālayam;
Arhayet dāna-mānābhyāṁ
maitryā-abhinna cakṣuṣā.*

Therefore worship Me in all beings as their Self, who are already My temples, by removing their felt wants, dāna, and respecting them while doing so, māna, and with an attitude of friendliness and non-separateness.

Swami Vivekananda referred to the central theme of this verse without mentioning *Srimad Bhagavatam*, in his lecture on 'The Future of India' delivered in Madras in 1897 — Don't merely serve people, but worship them. 'Worship is the exact equivalent of the Sanskrit word, and no other English word will do.'² Service with reverence becomes worship. 'There is divinity in every human being. Therefore, worship Me in every human being. I have built a temple for Myself in all of them. ~~Wo~~ ship Me, not merely serve

Me,' says the verse. *Arhayet* means *arcayet*, worship. How to worship God in man? *Dāna-mānābhyām* — through *dāna* and *māna* — removing their felt earthly wants. If they are hungry, find food or employment for them. If they are suffering from disease, find medical treatment for them. In every way, try to remove their felt wants. That is called *dāna*. While doing so, also *respect them*. Do not look down upon them. So *māna* comes in. *Dāna* and *māna*. What a beautiful conception of inter-human relations! Then comes *maitryā*, with a friendly attitude, I am your friend, have that attitude. When people go to a village to help the villagers, the villagers suspect them. People there have been exploited all the time. Town people come to the villages to exploit only. So make them realize, 'I am your friend', *maitryā*. Then comes a wonderful word, full of Vedantic ideas — *abhinna cakṣuṣā* — with an attitude of non-separateness. There is the same Atman in you and in me.

This *abhinna cakṣu* is highly praised in all Vedantic literature; but unfortunately, for a thousand years, India practised only the opposite, *blinna cakṣu*, all the time, discriminating between man and man, group and group. We failed to respect and practise these great teachings for the past one thousand years. That will completely change in the modern period. Swami Vivekananda said in a letter from America to India in 1893: 'No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the low in such a fashion as Hinduism.'³ In the modern age that will end. It is here that you have the precious contribution of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and the Holy Mother — a thorough social revolution, gentle and peaceful, so that the whole nation will implement practical Vedanta. Vedantic ideas will be expressed in all aspects of inter-human relations. So serve the people; respect

2. C.W., vol. 3, p. 301.

3. C.W., vol. 5, p. 15.

them; look upon them as a spark of the Divine, whether they are Christians, Muslims, Hindus, or low class, white or black. This ancient Vedantic message India receives today in powerful accents from Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and Holy Mother Sarada Devi through both teaching and example.

I shall just mention two events, one from Sri Ramakrishna's life and another from Holy Mother's life. Sri Ramakrishna did many *sadhana*s in his spiritual quest, including Christian and Muslim. One special *sadhana* he did which nobody before had ever done. When he was in Dakshineswar, nearby there was a hut of an untouchable. He went at night to that hut and cleaned the latrine of that untouchable, praying to the Divine Mother, 'Mother, let me give up the notion that I am superior as a brahmana. Make me the servant of all.' This is a profound action which has a tremendous consequence for India of the future. The spirit of service should be the main theme of men and women even of high position.

Then you come to the Holy Mother. In spite of hailing from a very orthodox Hindu social background, she lovingly treated a Muslim boy, fed him with motherly love, and washed the place herself after his meal. The Mother made no distinction—whether one is a Hindu or a Muslim or a Christian. Similarly, when Miss Margaret Noble (whose name changed to Sister Nivedita later) came from England to India to do service to our people, Swami Vivekananda welcomed her but faced a difficulty: how to introduce her to the Hindu society. She is a Christian, a *mleccha* according to the orthodox Hindus at that time. Even Swamiji was not allowed to enter the Dakshineswar Temple because he had been to a foreign country. So Swamiji was worried about Margaret. He said to himself: 'I shall introduce this Miss Margaret Noble to the Holy Mother. If she accepts her, then the whole of India will accept her.' With that thought he went to

Calcutta with Margaret Noble and introduced her to the Holy Mother, 'Mother, here is your daughter from England, Margaret.' And immediately, Mother got up from her bed, held her with both her hands and made her sit on her own bed. Swamiji said to himself, 'My heart is pleased. Now the whole of India will accept this wonderful Irish-English woman.' And you know what great work this Sister Nivedita did in India. Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, and hosts of national patriots, including Subrahmanya Bharati of Tamil Nadu, loved and respected her. The whole of India speaks highly of her. I have received great inspiration from her writings, especially *The Master as I Saw Him*.

All see in Swami Vivekananda a great preacher of social equality, of harmony between man and man, and one who worked hard to raise our women to higher levels of freedom and self-expression. In his *Life of Vivekananda*, Romain Rolland describes him (Ninth Impression, 1979, p. 4) as 'energy personified', and describes the impact of Vivekananda-literature on himself in these powerful words (p. 146):

His [Vivekananda's] words are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel choruses. I cannot touch these sayings of his, scattered as they are through the pages of books at thirty years' distance, without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock. And what shocks, what transports must have been produced when in burning words they issued from the lips of the hero!

Swami Vivekananda has expressed his philosophy briefly as man-making and nation-building. His teachings, especially his message of *tyāga* and *sevā*, renunciation and service, must reach our people today. Our country is passing through a very difficult period. Our politics and our administration are corrupt from top to bottom; there is widespread violence. They are our current

maladies, but never forget that we have also our remedies. These remedies you will find in the great Vivekananda-literature in its message of practical Vedanta. When those remedies are applied, the maladies will be overcome. Today that is our responsibility here in Madurai. We have problems arising from the crusted Hindu society of the past. We have to change that society. Make it more human, more free and egalitarian, as taught by our own Vedanta, with the spirit of service to all coming out of it. That will come to people in this Madurai area through the help of this great institution. That is the importance of this Sri Ramakrishna Temple which proclaims to one and all Sri Ramakrishna's Vedantic message — 'Every *jiva* is Siva; service of the *jiva* is worship of Siva.' Swami Vivekananda said that if our people follow these two principles of renunciation and service, if our people intensify India in these channels, the rest will take care of itself. Our people have to develop 'What can I do for you? How can I help you?' attitude in all inter-human relations. When I talk to the Secretariat staff in various states of India, I tell them, 'Develop that spirit when you sit on that Secretariat chair. When you sit on your chair at home, you may have an attitude of self-interest; but in the Secretariat it must be different. You are there as the servant of the people. And when people come to you, you have to respond to them: "What can I do for you, how can I help you?"'

That spirit of service has ceased to capture the mind of most of our people after Independence. We are still self-centred with no concern for others. But when this strengthening, purifying, and unifying Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature becomes current coin in society, the whole character will change. The spirit of service, the spirit of dedication, love for the people, all these will come as a result of this teaching. As Swami Vivekananda said, 'have fire and spread all over', for the making of an Indian nation. A revolution, a non-violent,

silent, social revolution, by education, by spreading of healthy ideas — that is the work that the Ramakrishna Movement will do in any part of India or in the world outside as well, adapted to the needs of local conditions. This work is going on all over the world. Just about two years ago, the German Vedanta Society near Bonn has purchased a big house, performed its dedication ceremony, and they want a swami from India to take up Vedanta work there. Holland already has got a swami. In Australia there is the Sarada Math, presently working wonderfully well all over that vast continent. People want these things. India is not thrusting it on them. They spend money for it. They pay to maintain the Vedanta teachers and pay for their travel from and to India. Which religion or philosophy in the world has this blessing except this rational and humanistic Vedanta? Therefore, all over the world there is plenty of scope for service for the good of the people, to nurture harmony and concord.

We are now in this Madurai Ashrama which has been going on for many years. I am very happy to be here again. I have been coming here from 1953 onwards. And now, with this impressive new Sri Ramakrishna Temple, this Math will become a dynamic centre to radiate healthy positive ideas and ideals. Not a single negative idea will go out of this and other Math centres. Rabin-dranath Tagore told Romain Rolland, 'If you want to know India, study Vivekananda. In him everything is positive and nothing negative.' That is the spirit that will radiate from this great institution where Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda reign to bless people.

I am very happy to be with all of you today. I accept your great love and good wishes and I hope we shall have a wonderful time hereafter with the help of this kind of institution — spreading healthy ideas, spreading healthy ideals. Nothing more is

(Continued on page 582)

The Centenary of the Ramakrishna Mission: Concluding Function at New Delhi

SWAMI GAHANANANDA

We give below the text of the benedictory address delivered by Revered Maharaj at the Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi, at 4.30 p.m. on Saturday, the 18th April, 1998, on the occasion of the Concluding Function of the Mission's Centenary.

Respected Vice-President of India Sri Krishan Kantji and dear friends,

I deem it a privilege and honour to confer benediction on this august gathering in the name of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, on this august occasion of the Concluding Function of the Centenary of the Ramakrishna Mission.

The importance and significance of this function cannot be underestimated in any way because the Ramakrishna Mission has become a great phenomenon as it were in the modern world, be it in the form of the social and humanitarian services it renders, or be it in the nature of its laying stress on the practice of true religion and development of character, or be it in the nature of its rooting human beings in the ideals of renunciation and service either as full-fledged monks or lay disciples of this great and hallowed Order. Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, who incarnated in this world only in the last century, was the embodiment of love, renunciation, catholicity and the desire to serve mankind. After his physical disappearance from this world, Swami Vivekananda and a galaxy of his brother-disciples in a meeting on 1 May 1897 decided to form themselves as an Association called the Ramakrishna Mission Association — 'a machine for elevating the Indian masses and a lever for the good of humanity'. At their next meeting on 5 May 1897, this Association spelt out the objectives, method and scope of work in India and abroad. The twin ideals

of this organization are '*Ātmano mokṣārtham jagaddhitāya ca*' — for the liberation of one's own Self and for the betterment of the world. The method for its achievement is — '*Śiva jñāne jīva sevā*' — service to *jīva* as *Shiva*, service to man as worship of God. The objective being — '*Bahujana hitāya bahujana sukhāya*' — for the good of many, for the happiness of many.

As you are all perhaps aware, there are two distinct features of the Ramakrishna Mission's work: One is the ideal of the worship of God in the service of man, and the other is that the Mission is open to all, without any distinction based on religion, race, caste or nationality. While the Math holds to the culture of Indian Rishis and provides vitality to the Movement, the Mission serves the needy and helpless, and provides its humanitarian dynamism. The Math engages itself in the training of monastic and lay devotees and the Mission carries out service to the poor and afflicted as worship of the Divine. In this way both the wings disseminate the unique message of the Great Master, Sri Ramakrishna. In fact, Sri Ramakrishna is the guiding spirit behind these two vibrant institutions and their activities.

The Ramakrishna Mission is apolitical and cherishes the well-being and happiness of all. While the Mission receives help and co-operation in carrying out its philanthropic activities, it is not governed by the worldly policies of its helpers. A hundred years have passed now since the Rama-

krishna Mission was founded by Swami Vivekananda and his brother-disciples fully dedicated to the cause of humanity. What began in a humble way with a handful of people has since become a world-wide institution. It has now become a major force of influence in every field of social service in India. It is, therefore, in the fitness of things that all of us are celebrating today the 100 years of the establishment of the Ramakrishna Mission.

I am very happy that our Honourable Vice-President of India, Sri Krishan Kantji, is here in our midst to preside over this Concluding Function of the Centenary of the Ramakrishna Mission and I congratulate him wholeheartedly for participating in it. The significance and value of this Concluding Function has increased considerably owing to the august presence of our Vice-President who found time to come here today in spite of his busy schedule. I am also happy to see the distinguished gathering of our brother-monks and devotees who have turned out in large numbers to make this function a grand success.

Today our nation is passing through a crisis. On the one hand there is erosion of our great culture and, on the other hand, we have lost the fundamental values of life which, at one time, were considered to be the greatest wealth of man. Today we only think of amassing material wealth, grossly ignorant of the fact that one day we have to leave the entire wealth which we amass in this world. So, what is wanted is the acquisition of the wealth of virtues which will help in preserving the mental and spiritual health of the individual, and therefore of our nation, which is grossly suffering from sickness of spirit. There is an urgent need for re-building our nation and raising the intellectual, moral and spiritual image of our country in the comity of nations. So, let us fully dedicate ourselves to the service of humanity and the re-building of our nation which is the crying need of the hour. Swamiji has

reiterated, "The national ideals of India are RENUNCIATION and SERVICE. Intensify her in those channels, and the rest will take care of itself."¹

The role the Ramakrishna Mission has been playing through these twin ideals of renunciation and service for the last one hundred years in diverse fields of human welfare is now quite evident and tangible at national and international levels. It is a part of an unfolding history now. We are already getting glimpses of Swamiji's visions manifest in the regenerated and rejuvenated India and elsewhere.

Swamiji prophesied about a very bright and glorious future of India — its glory even surpassing all its past glories — '... one vision I see clear as life before me: that the ancient Mother has awakened once more, sitting on Her throne rejuvenated, more glorious than ever. Proclaim Her to all the world with the voice of peace and benediction.'² Further, he has said that we have to deluge not only India but the whole world with India's spirituality, for the survival of humanity — 'We must go out we must conquer the world through our spirituality and philosophy. There is no other alternative, we must do it or die. The only condition of national life, of awakened and vigorous national life, is the conquest of the world by Indian thought.'³

Swami Vivekananda said education is the panacea for all social evils. Hence, the Ramakrishna Mission is trying to run model institutions for imparting man-making and character-building education, following our age-old heritage, tradition and values as well as embracing whatever is good in modern days. Swamiji said, 'What we want are Western science coupled with Vedanta,

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 5, p. 228. [Hereafter, C.W.]

2. C.W., vol. 4, p. 353.

3. C.W., vol. 3, p. 277.

Brahmacharya as the guiding motto, and also Shraddha and faith in one's own self.⁴ People and the Government have also to come forward to appreciate and emulate such endeavours for the betterment of the society. Our national motto is — '*Satyameva jayate*' — truth alone triumphs. Our national educational policy needs to be framed keeping in mind our hallowed tradition and heritage, our age-old, tested and life-giving values and ideals.

Before I conclude, I would like to draw your attention to some of the inspiring words of Swami Vivekananda, which energize the Movement:

I must see my machine in strong working order, and then knowing sure that I have put in a lever for the good of humanity, in India at least, which no power can drive back, I will sleep, without caring what will be next....⁵

My whole ambition in life is to set in motion a machinery which will bring noble ideas to the door of everybody, and then let men and women settle their own fate.⁶

My ideal indeed can be put into a few words and that is: to preach unto

mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life.... Who will give the world light? Sacrifice in the past has been the Law, it will be, alas, for ages to come. The earth's bravest and best will have to sacrifice themselves for the good of many, for the welfare of all. Buddhas by the hundred are necessary with eternal love and pity.⁷

Fifty centuries are looking on you, the future of India depends on you. Work on.... This is a great field for work.⁸

...may I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls—and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship.⁹

The Lord is great. I know He will help me. I may perish of cold or hunger in this land, but I bequeath to you, young men, this sympathy, this struggle for the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed.¹⁰

May Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna be our guiding spirit in this great endeavour, this great Yajna! □

4. C.W., vol. 5, p. 366.

5. C.W., vol. 5, pp. 136-7.

6. C.W., vol. 5, p. 29.

7. C.W., vol. 7, p. 501.

8. C.W., vol. 4, p. 370.

9. C.W., vol. 5, p. 137.

10. C.W., vol. 5, p. 16.

Strive for Harmony and Concord

(Continued from page 579)

needed. 'Ours is to put the chemicals together, the crystallisation comes in the law of nature.'⁴ That is what Swami Vivekananda said. Spread healthy ideas and ideals among the people. Slowly character will be developed; concern for others irrespec-

tive of caste, religion, or social status will emerge. Love and the spirit of service will come. I hope that many great blessings will come to this great centre of ancient Pandian culture and politics. Let us hope that Madurai and surrounding areas will be highly benefited by this institution. □

4. C.W., vol. 4, p. 362.

Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad

SWAMI SRIDHARANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

The second part of the *mantra* (III.i.4) is even more important. The *Brahmavit* is said to be one who plays with his Atman, *Ātma-kṛīḍaḥ*. Games are *bāhya-sādhana-sāpekṣa*, i.e. they require external material and equipment like bat, balls, etc., as well as someone else to play with. One's joy in playing thus depends upon external accessories. When one does not need anything from outside, that play is *bāhya-sādhana-nirapekṣa*, without external accessories. When a person is awake, he moves about and plays with external things, but the only object of the Knower's play is the awareness of Atman in all persons and things of the world. Here the accessory is the Atman in various forms. Sri Ramakrishna exemplified this in his God-intoxicated life: he used to sing and dance in ecstasy while people followed him with various musical instruments; now and again he used to go into *samādhi*. So there were instruments and people singing *kirtan*, but to Sri Ramakrishna these appeared only as forms of the Divine. When he completed his multifaceted *sādhana*, he thought that the purpose of his birth had been accomplished and wanted to end his play. But the Divine Mother ordered him to live in the *Bhāva-mukha*-way, on the borderline between the phenomenal and the transcendental, sometimes tilting towards the world of phenomena but always aware of the Divine behind the name-form duality, which therefore had no hold on him. And sometimes he tilted to the transcendental plane and went into deep *samādhi*. *Ātmakṛīḍaḥ* and *Ātmaratīḥ* are the Upaniṣadic way of telling that the *Vidvān* (Knower) lives on the borderline between the world phenomena and the Spirit. While

moving about in the world with his senses wide awake but with all his faculties under his control, he sees only the Lord of the universe everywhere. And the moment he (rather, the Mother) so desires, he withdraws into the oneness of God. When once Sri Ramakrishna was in Calcutta *maidan*, seeing an Anglo-Indian boy who was leaning against a tree with his legs crossed, he saw in the boy Sri Krishna (bent in three places, *tribhaṅga*) and went into *samādhi*. And in another incident, to enjoy the divine *Līlā* (play), he asked that he be taken to a church to see the Mother's devotees who prayed to Her in the form of Jesus Christ.

Such a one is not a lazy person; he is *Kriyāvān* (continuously active). How? By inspiring people to be active spiritually. This is exemplified in the life of every *Avatāra*. Here activity is not motivated by self-interest; it is inspired by Divine command alone. The *Avatāra Puruṣa* lives a shining life of spirituality, radiating wisdom and spiritual understanding, and depicting the correct behaviour of a truly spiritual person. Romain Rolland said that Sri Ramakrishna was content to live a perfect spiritual life internally and externally, and leave it to society to interpret his deeds. Such a one is immensely active with the activity of *jñāna*, *bhakti*, *dāna*, *dayā*, and *kṣamā* — all divine qualities. Every incarnation of God has been infinitely more active than any ordinary person. When the disciples asked the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi why she worked the whole day and hardly slept at night, she replied that she had to attend to the spiritual welfare of the devotees who had not even the time to eat. The activity in this case is based on sheer

compassion towards mankind. Not a single moment is wasted; rather, time is effectively used in attending to the spiritual welfare of people, giving to each according to his/her need and capacity. When Narendranath was going through grinding poverty, burdened by his father's debt, he went to Sri Ramakrishna for help. The latter sent him to the Divine Mother to ask Her directly for whatever he wanted from Her. Three times Narendranath went to Her but each time he forgot to ask for money and comfort for his family's sake, and instead, asked for knowledge and devotion. Then Sri Ramakrishna said that the Divine Mother so willed that there will be no dearth of basic necessities for his family, and took up that responsibility to prevent starvation of Narendranath's family. Thus it is, to be *Kriyāvān*. So every incarnation of God knows how to use time and energy to help mankind.

When it is said that such a person is the best of *Brahma-jñānis*, there is no intention of fixing a measure of *Brahmajñāna*. For, either one is a *Brahmajñāni*, or he is not. There is no possibility of saying more or less, no percentage, in *Brahmajñāna*, for it cannot be measured. When we say 'I', do we partition the 'I' and talk of a portion of myself? We take the 'I am' in totality. When this *aham* (I) or *vyaktitva* (individuality) breaks open its shell and merges in the Universal 'I', then also that Atman or Brahman cannot be partitioned or compartmentalized; it is a whole-some experience and not a partial one.

Sri Ramakrishna gave the example of people who have heard of the ocean but have not actually seen it. When they go towards the ocean, they first experience the cool, unpolluted breeze. Going still nearer, they hear the waves dashing against the shore and the conviction that the ocean exists gets strengthened. Going nearer still, they see the wide expanse of the blue water stretching up to the horizon. Then they go to the shore and drink a handful of water. All these, from feeling the cool breeze to the

drinking of a handful of water, merely confirm that the ocean exists.

Similarly, a *sādhaka* who desires to experience Atman or Brahman, while advancing towards that experience, gets an inkling of his nearness to the goal. His whole being becomes purified, all the mental dirt is burnt out, he becomes less selfish, and his self grows to a universal proportion. He has not yet become a *Brahmajñā*, but has only been given indications that he is on the right track. As he becomes more and more selfless, his sympathizing with others and understanding, his being concerned with others as his own self, breaks the ego's barriers and he expands into a wider area. He ultimately loses his separate identity and merges in the Divine. Sri Ramakrishna gave the parable of the salt doll going to measure the depth of the sea and becoming one with it. This total dissolving is known as *Brahmajñāna*.

Losing one's individuality is an extremely tricky problem. When Narendranath came first, Sri Ramakrishna knew him to be one of the *Ṛṣis* of the *Sapta-ṛṣi-maṇḍala* (galaxy of seven *Ṛṣis*) who are in eternal meditation on the Absolute. But when he tried to raise Narendranath's mind by touching him, Narendranath — who was a *Ṛṣi* — wept and cried, when on the verge of losing his individuality in the Absolute, saying, 'What are you doing? I have my parents at home.' So the process of self-elimination into Atman or Brahman is not easy. Before that happens, the ego and individuality remain, and the ambition to reach the goal remains. Before reaching the goal, or even the proximity to it, and before final immersion into it, such noble feelings as charity, generosity and compassion must well up in the aspirant; otherwise, the possibility of self-deception always remains. This is the catch. When the aspirant, by his continuous and diligent perseverance under the guidance of a Guru and with the compassion of the Divine, changes his centre of consciousness from individual to universal,

then, in that experience, there is no percentage. However, there are stages in the level of proximity of the individual to the Absolute, in the extent of his coming closer to God.

So, what do terms like *Brahmavid-varīṣṭha* mean? How do comparative (*Varīyān*) and superlative (*Varīṣṭha*) terms come in? The Upaniṣads talk about such people who are *Āvatāras*, whose personalities cannot be measured by human standards. Saints and seers who are realized souls, prefer to live in a cave, immersed in meditation for the betterment of the world. Swami Vivekananda said that one noble thought of such a saint is a blessing for the whole of humanity, though he does not actively participate in the joys and sorrows of humanity. Other *Brahmajñānis* live in society, share in its joys and sorrows and problems, to show men and women how to face these problems. They are *in* this world, but not *of* it. *Brahmajñānis* are all hundred per cent Knowers of Brahman, but in the post-*Brahmajñāna* period, if the body continues to remain, there are some who become fully involved in the problems of lesser mortals. So, the conception of *Brahmavid-vara*, *Brahmavid-varīyān*, *Brahmavid-varīṣṭha*—the relative terms—point only to their behavioural pattern after *Brahmajñāna*. Some go into the forest cave and are not *Kriyāvāns*. They do not wish to be disturbed by engaging in the world's concerns. Others are *Ātmakrīḍas*, *Ātmaratis*, but not *Kriyāvāns*. But there are a third class of *Brahmajñānis* who are *Ātmakrīḍas*, *Ātmaratis* and *Kriyāvāns*, for the betterment of mankind. This is so because they cannot contain their compassion.

So, when all the five qualities mentioned in this *mantra* are predominantly manifest in a *Brahmajñāni*, then by the social standard—but not by the measure of *Brahmajñāna*—one is called *varīṣṭha* in the superlative, the best of *Brahmajñānis*. Satisfied only in the Atman or Brahman, he is relentlessly engaged in actions of *tyāga*, *vairāgya*, *jñāna*, *bhakti*, *kṛpā* and *dayā*, and re-

moves from himself the awe and reverence felt for him by the common man, to show him the way to lead a spiritual life *while living in the world*. From the worldly standpoint, since he is also a product of society even as we are, Swamiji used to say, 'I call him a traitor who, having been educated, nursed in luxury by the heart's blood of the downtrodden millions of toiling poor, never even takes a thought for them.' So, all the *Āvatāras*, saints and seers own their debt towards the society in which they were born, brought up, educated and nourished, and work for its benefit in different ways. In meditation also one can throw thoughts for the world's welfare. So, it is not right to denigrate the *Brahmajñāni* who lives in deep meditation in a cave, and praise the *Brahmajñāni* who mixes with people.

Narendranath, who had feared and protested the first approach to *Nirvikalpa Samādhi* because he was unprepared, was later immersed in *Nirvikalpa Samādhi*. Sri Ramakrishna, knowing him to be a *Brahmajñāni*, allowed him to enjoy that bliss for a little while. Later, one day, he asked Narendranath what his ideal in life was. He replied that his goal was to remain totally immersed in *Nirvikalpa Samādhi* for all eternity. Only, for the maintenance of the body, he wished to occasionally come out of *Samādhi* and have something to eat. Sri Ramakrishna said that such an attitude revealed a mean-hearted, selfish person. He continued: Fie upon you! You are thinking only of your own joys and pleasures, while I thought you would be a huge banyan tree under whose shade passersby, tired of the worldly struggle, would rest—like the many birds who make their nests in the branches of the tree. Instead of this ideal, you think only of your own joy in meditation! Thus, Sri Ramakrishna wanted to impress upon Narendranath that to be a *Brahmajñāni* is no doubt a good goal of life, but better still is the goal of becoming a *Brahmavid-varīṣṭha*. One may be a liberated

person, but society has contributed towards his liberation, and he must therefore discharge his debt to society. And unless he serves the world, he does not repay his debt.

In another instance it is shown how the debt is repaid. Even an *Avatāra*, like any other individual, accepts a teacher. Totapuri, a Vedantic teacher, came one day to Dakshineswar. When his trained eyes fell on the young Ramakrishna, he at once understood that this person was fit to be taught Vedanta. He told the young man: 'I find wonderful signs in your physiognomy. You are fit to be a recipient of Vedantic teachings.' And sure enough, what took Totapuri forty years to achieve, that *Nirvikalpa Samādhi* was easily achieved by Sri Ramakrishna and he continued in it for three days at a stretch. Totapuri was at his wit's end to bring him back to the normal plane of consciousness. One of the signs of an *Avatāra* is that the incompleteness in his human Guru is completed by him as his disciple. Totapuri who was a theoretical *Brahmajñani* — one who could control his mind and enjoy the bliss of *Nirvikalpa Samādhi* — did not know the application of that *Brahmajñāna* in the form of universal humanism. One evening, when the master and the pupil were discussing in front of the sacred fire, a servant belonging to the temple garden wanted to take a piece of charcoal to light his hubble-bubble. Totapuri started abusing him and was on the verge of hitting him even, when Sri Ramakrishna looked at his revered Guru quizzically and asked, 'Is this what Vedanta has taught you? Is not the world Brahman? Then why do you abuse this man seeking a bit of charcoal?' These words of Sri Ramakrishna were to pay back the debt to his teacher, by sharing with him how to be a *Brahmavid-variṣṭha*, how to utilize wisdom for the betterment of society. From the *Brahmajñani* flows compassion, like the *pāpa-hāriṇi-Gaṅgā* (the redeeming Ganges), which was not known to Totapuri.

In the *Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa*, we find

that after Ramachandra was married and ensconced in the palace, the *Rṣis* and *Munis* who knew the purpose of Sri Rama's birth, feared that having taken his seat in the world of *Māyā*, he might have forgotten why he had been born, and so there would be no chance of Ravana being killed. So, a group of Seers went to Sri Rama and started praising him and praying to him, the last line of every stanza was to ask him if he had forgotten the purpose for which he had taken birth. Sri Rama replied, 'You are all very venerable, learned souls, but I do not understand how you have lost track of everything.' This meant: you are still behaving like a human being, losing faith, being worried, and impatient. But, being an *Avatāra*, Sri Rama was never cast down, never impatient, and ever in joy and ecstasy. 'The time will come when I will act,' said He. They then collected courage and asked, 'Holy sir, when will the time come?' And Sri Rama replied, 'Since you are impatient, I tell you that when Ravana dishonours Janaki, then it will happen.' Sri Rama understood that they were all still confused, and quietly rebuked them: 'It does not behove you to be so impatient, wait and see. Everything is possible in the domain of *Māyā*.' And it happened just as He said. Thus, the Knower of Brahman is never egotistic, and never shows himself off. The Holy Quran says that the sign of a person blessed by the Divine is compassion: like a heavily laden fruit tree, not a single branch of which is erect. All the branches are bent low and the fruits that they carry are the compassion of the Divine in that person. Thus a *Brahmajñani* is one with everyone, not an *Ativādi* but an *Ātmakṛidāḥ*, *Ātmaratīḥ* and *Kriyāvān*. Greatness and nobility to suffer for others is what turns a *Brahmavid-vara* into a *Brahmavid-variṣṭha*. Christ's last words on the cross are significant, 'Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.' This is the top-most level in spiritual consciousness achievable by a person.

(to be continued)

God—An Autobiography

DR. K.S. RANGAPPA

Dr. K.S. Rangappa of Bangalore in this poem brings out Vedantic ideas of which he is an earnest admirer and upholder.

'I am; I've been; I shall be;
I've never *not* been;
Nor shall I cease to be, ever,'
I told MySELF,
For, there was then no other
But I, ME, MySELF;
To tell, to be told or to listen.

'So what?' I asked MySELF.
'What use, what purpose, what profit
Being I, all in all? All alone?',
Queried I to MySELF.

'Should there be another?'
Was the resounding demand.
No reply arose to answer I
From the Silence, vast and bright.

Well, in fun, I resolved,
I'd make MySELF into many
That I may enjoy MySELF,
Sporting MySELF with MySELF.

Timeless Silence I broke then
With a Big Bang of Space and Time.
Fiery sun and starry heavens,
Restless waters and wandering winds
In shoreless sky I spun,
Like the spider its duping web.
But all, funless remained still
—A toy enormous,
But, alas, none to be amused.

Bulk only of mass and eternity,
Clear it was, wasn't 'nuf.
Being, animate, cognizant,
Was called for.

Ventured I to brew and breathe life
Into compounds countless of MySELF.

From speck of eyeless amoeba
To giant whale and elephant,
From crawling insects
To roaming beasts and winged birds
I cast in whimsy moulds
On a ball, spinning cool,
Tireless round an undying sun.

With never a smile on them,
The creatures all
Ate and fought and bred,
Never knowing, never caring
Whence, whither, why of themselves.

Oh these, not worthy yet
Of I, the SELF, the All-mighty!

I patted the pasty clay
On the endless wheel,
Through all the living shapes till then,
To homo erectus, thence to homo
sapiens,
Squeezing eons past to brief span
Of nine months in woman's womb.

This homo I made all of beasts before,
And more:
A head, thoughtful, alert,
Denied to brutish bulk;
Eyes, little though as a lemon leaf,
Could take in heavens many and far.
Homo could laugh and cry and
cogitate,
Leaving behind all lesser fry.

Creature this, elegant smart,
Lost in wonder at the tools he had,
Which could measure so much without,
Forgot the realm, measureless,
Wondrous more within.

The upstart, vain, myopic,
Abused, ape-like, gifts of powers
Of brain and brawn galore.
Homo dared to make
A robot in *his* own image
—A toy making a puppet toy!

There he stands with equal mate,
Proud cynosure both of all creation,
Knowing not their divinity.
Their in-sight, keener far
Than their eyes out can stretch,
They can, reining in the brute within,
Raise brightest thought

To *MySELF*, the Power autonomous,
The parent, the nurse, all in all,
Who sings them, too, to silent bliss.

Yet, homo, dearest image of *MySELF*,
Cheats himself as a tiny ego, apart
—Like the petal denying the
lotus-mother—
Suffers mirage-pains and -joys;
And begs abjectly for rescue
From the nightmare of decay and death.
He has but to wake up
To realize himself as none but *MySELF*
—In, out, everywhere, always—
GOD, the SELF, luminous,
Silent, serene, blissful,
The Circle perfect, beyond thought,
BEING, immortal, first and last.

AUM, shanti, shanti, shanti.

Fixing the Mind on God - IX

(Continued from page 572)

us. Then all inter-human relationships will be divinized and it will amount to the worship of the spirit by the spirit.

If one loses sight of the God *in* man at the time of serving people, he merely does good to the world and earns the merit of such good actions which binds him. If, however, he tries every time he fails, to fix his attention on God *in* the served, this practice which is much better than worship of God in bricks or pegs, will by the grace of God result in spiritual elevation to the perception of God all around. Thus, this is a unique method which conduces to the liberation of the individual, good of the world and better inter-human relationship.

The reader may wonder whether this progress is 'humanly' possible. We shall cite for a reply in the affirmative two devotees of God, born in the line of *asuras*, who had true insight:

When God became pleased with the devo-

tion of Prahlada and wanted to bestow on him a boon, that unique devotee said, 'If you must give me a boon, let it be that those who have tortured me may not have to suffer punishment.' The meaning of those words is that it was God who tortured Prahlada in the form of his persecutors, and, if they suffered punishment, it would really be God who suffered.⁶

Again, consider the case of Bibhishana: Once a merchant was shipwrecked. He floated to the shore of Ceylon, where Bibhishana was the king of the monsters. Bibhishana ordered his servants to bring the merchant to him. At the sight of him Bibhishana was overwhelmed with joy and said: 'Ah! He looks like my Rama. The same human form!' He adorned the merchant with robes and jewels and worshipped him.⁷

(to be continued)

6. Gospel, p. 548.

7. Gospel, p. 407.

Bankimchandra and Goddess Durga

BIKAS BASU

Bankimchandra's admiration for Goddess Durga found expression in his novels too, and in a way it collates his life and works. The author, of Calcutta, dwells on this point in this article. A well-known writer in Bengali, the author has a number of books to his credit including three published from the reputed Ananda Bazar House.

Readers of Bankimchandra's novel, *Devi Chaudhurani*, may be tempted to collate its heroine with Goddess Durga. Presumably, the analogy between a goddess and a character in a novel, if stretched too far, would be untenable. And obviously, equating the two — one of them a deity and the other a character in a novel — would only be disappointing. But the self-same spirit of fighting evil cannot go unnoticed even by a casual reader. The Hindu idea of Prakriti — the woman Power — is imaged in exquisite taste in both the goddess and her literary counterpart. The imagery is subtle, but not imperceptible.

Devi Chaudhurani — the name given to Prafulla, the heroine, by her associates as a token of love and admiration — literally means a 'goddesslike princess'. And so she is — the daughter-in-law in a Bengali Zamindar family of the early nineteenth century, a serene beauty with the fearlessness and charm of a goddess. The heroine's majestic demeanours adequately contribute to visualizing the image of the demon-slaying Durga on the lion as depicted in the Hindu mythology.

In the novel, the heroine — had other things been normal — would have made an ideal housewife. As events unfurled one after the other, she undergoes a thorough change — mental and spiritual — to lead with effortless ease and exquisite grace an army of dacoits with a view to helping the poor-folk she comes by. The reader is all the more enchanted, as the milieu is a forest area

in Bengal, and she works miracles like a female counterpart of the hero of the Sherwood Forest.

Unlike Durga the goddess, she does not however really conquer any particular 'asura' (demon) and hence cannot be dubbed a perfect replica of the goddess. But both of them, without losing their feminineness, perform with charm and grace the job — vindicating the good over the evil — which is normally considered a man's preserve. The heroine's sublime beauty with a touch of divinity, her domineering personality, and the fearless way she behaves, all remind the reader of the novel of none other than Goddess Durga.

In Bankimchandra's other works too the image of the goddess occurs. In *Sitaram*, Sree is the heroine and she displays courage in a rare form reminding the reader again of Goddess Durga. Just visualize the most moving scene in the novel. Gangaram, her brother, a rebel in the eyes of the ruling authorities, was put to mockery of a public trial while a real execution was awaiting him. With a throbbing heart the reader waits — what would happen? — who is going to save this unfortunate young man? Would he really be executed?

Sree too gathered the milling crowds that gathered to have a better look at the goings-on, but she was not just another. Ignoring all social norms and public criticism, she stood straight on the branch of a banyan tree, like the familiar picture of the mythological goddess on her lion.

In fact, Bankimchandra, while delineating the episode, could not help giving his heroine the epithet 'Simhavahini', which is attributed exclusively to Goddess Durga, the lion being her carrier. She engineers a commotion amongst the crowds by her dignified presence; makes all the King's men, soldiers and guards, unmindful by her hallowed appearance on the branch of a tree. And it is a wonder how she clinches it. How the unrest ultimately leads to the miraculous rescue of her rebel brother from his intended doom — an execution in public.

In *Anandamatha*, another novel by Bankimchandra, the novelist exploits a more important trait of the goddess who, as per mythology, happens to be the Universal Mother too.

Anandamatha is the name of a monastery hidden from the general view in the midst of a forest. Mother Goddess is worshipped there in an idol. This was a monastery with a difference. The residents, 'santans', the devoted and dedicated sons of the Mother, strictly observe celibacy to fight injustice effectively. But the name 'Anandamatha' which literally means 'a monastery of joy', suggests that its residents sacrifice their lives and matrimonial pleasures cheerfully for the cause of the Mother Goddess representing the motherland.

That this Mother in *Anandamatha* is none other than Goddess Durga is reflected in the eulogy of her divinely physical beauty. The *Vande Mataram* lyric superbly relates the two, gives even an overt hint to their identity in the line, 'Tvam hi Durgā daśapraharaṇa dhāriṇī' (Thou art armoured with ten different weapons held in thy hands). Durga too, the reader may note, has as many as ten hands with various weapons to fight the Asura who represents evil.

Bankimchandra once wrote a remarkable article on Durga but that is a scholastic piece and not of much interest to common readers, as they would not find in its author Bankimchandra, the fiction-writer, or even

the writer of *Kamalakanta Daphter* — a humorous and immensely enjoyable treat. Ideas and observations that he could not fit in novels, nor in his serious articles, he expressed through Kamalakanta, a serious-cum-comic character created by him for this specific purpose.

Kamalakanta, an opium-addict, a critic of all social ills and a patriot, a day-dreamer, usually offers his ideas — of the national weaknesses and human follies — in a light vein, but at times he could be passionately serious too. *Amar Durgotsav* (Durga Festival of My Fancy) is such a piece.

The article reads: On one Saptami day, the first day of the three-day Puja ceremony, Kamalakanta takes a high dose of opium. He keeps day-dreaming under the influence of the narcotic, imagines himself forlorn on the high-seas, and clamours for mother's help. As to the true identity of the mother, he is uncertain. The mother that does appear before his drowsy eyes is no other than Goddess Durga, beauteous and bold, armoured and bejewelled, with the rest of her family in tow.

Kamalakanta offers floral tributes to her and entreats her with folded hands to leave her oceanic abode and live forever in Bengal. In his day-dream the goddess comes out of the ocean, but, for reasons known only to her, pays no heed to Kamalakanta's prayer. She simply disappears.

Kamalakanta clamours again for her comeback. This time, he promises the goddess his most sincere devotion and the maximum of sacrifices he could make on behalf of the sons of Bengal. He now identifies the goddess with 'Bangajamini' (Mother Bengal) and fervently hopes that she will certainly grant his prayer.

His prayer, granted or not, reveals that Bankimchandra's devotion to Goddess Durga was deep-rooted as he was philosophically inclined to the concept of Prakriti, the woman Power. He practically made it one of its leit-motifs. □

India under Minto and Hardinge: Political Observations and Ideas of Sister Nivedita Towards India's Struggle for Freedom

DR. MAMATA RAY AND DR. ANIL BARAN RAY

The authors, in a series of articles, have been presenting those incidents in the life of Nivedita and the role she played in arousing the national consciousness of the Indians for their attaining political freedom. Truly and in every way, she was dedicated to the cause of India, being a lover of the country and her people who contributed immensely to religion and science. This article focusses the times when Minto and Hardinge were at the helm of affairs in India. The unity of India and that India should become the queen of all nations — a thing we ought to remember today as always — was uppermost in her mind.

At the instance of Swami Vivekananda, Margaret Elizabeth Noble (born in Ireland in 1867) came to India in January 1898 to work basically for the education of women in India. Initiated as Sister Nivedita in March 1898, she made this country her own and breathed her last in Darjeeling in October 1911. In the period between the passing away of Swami Vivekananda (on 4 July 1902) and her own death in 1911, she extended her educational work to the whole nation, seeking to awaken it to a political fight against the British Raj of India. It was her considered opinion that the British rule in India produced nothing but 'moral degradation' and 'despicable enervation'¹ and that it had to be done away with. The pen-picture that she provides of India under the Viceroyalty of Lord Minto in the years 1905–1910, and of Lord Hardinge in the years 1910–1911, is arresting at once for the vividness with which she presents the anti-Indian repressive measures of the government and the inkling that it provides into Nivedita's socio-political philosophy as ex-

pressed through her keen and sympathetic observations on India's struggle for freedom.

I

Soon after implementing his plan for the partition of Bengal in October 1905 and thereby unwittingly inspiring a great amount of unrest in India, particularly in Bengal,² Lord Curzon resigned from the Viceroyalty of India, and Lord Minto succeeded Curzon in November 1905 to the Viceroyalty of an India which was like a volcano ready to erupt any moment. The Swadeshi movement was at its peak when Minto took over the Viceroyalty. As a sequel to Curzon's injudicious policies on various fronts, India, Bengal especially, had moved, first, from the politics of prayer and petition to the politics of passive resistance in the form of boycott and Swadeshi and then to the

1. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, ed. Sankari Prasad Basu (Calcutta: Nababharat Publishers, 1982), vol. 1, p. 447. [Hereafter, *Letters*.]

2. Tracing the genesis of unrest in Bengal to Curzon's politics, Nivedita writes: 'My view is ... that it was the Education Bill [1904] that did the work — the Convocation Speech [delivered at the Calcutta University on 11 February 1905] that roused the spirit — and Partition that opened war.' See *Letters*, vol. 2, p. 935.

politics of militant nationalism in the form of terrorism which became pronounced ever since the forcible break-up of the Bengal Provincial Conference at Barisal in April 1906 by Bampfylde Fuller, the Lieutenant-Governor of the new province of East Bengal and Assam, who unleashed Gurkhas on Barisal, banned the *Bande Mataram* slogan and sought to disaffiliate schools for participation in politics. Minto was embarrassed³ over the conduct of Fuller but he was also 'nervous' over the trend of events in Bengal, suffering from the consequences of the policies of his predecessor. His weakness arising out of a sense of uncertainty in dealing with a difficult situation made him depend more and more on his Civilian and this, in the opinion of Nivedita, made the situation worse. To quote Nivedita:

How terrible is the state of things now being initiated! One stands aghast at the weakness of Minto. A sort of mental and moral Armageddon. Two sides ranging for battle, not for cooperation. I can't think that the Civilian themselves are amazed at their own success over the Viceroy.⁴

At the instance of the Civilian or otherwise, Minto went for certain anti-Indian repressive measures like banning of 'seditious' meetings, prosecution of newspapers and the inquisition over schools and school-masters. To put this in the words of Nivedita:

You cannot imagine how frank is the government announcement of anti-Indian policy. Prosecution of newspapers. Inquisition over schools and school-masters.⁵

The atmosphere was so tense that Nivedita expected even her own imprisonment:

I do not think I have more than 5½ years

left for writing, for if I live beyond that time, I expect it to be in prison. The time is fast coming when even a European in India may be seized for *holding opinions*, which I should not condescend to deny. That being so, I cannot afford anything but the most intense quiet and continuity of work.⁶

Nivedita was so disgusted with the state of affairs that she wished the downfall of the British Government of India and believed that they would bring it about themselves by their repressive policies:

There will be a conflagration, brought about by [the British] themselves in 5 years from now. ... 'The reins will fall from their hands. Judgment will desert their counsels. And the end shall come!'⁷ The hour is striking, I hear the first strokes.⁸

Nivedita illustrates the anti-Indian policy of the British government of India with reference to the 'persecution' of the scientist Dr. J.C. Bose, a Professor at the Presidency College of Calcutta. Bose applied for leave on deputation. This was refused, and to make this refusal worse, Bose's work load was doubled making it '20 hours a week and he was harassed by unending official correspondence', by 'the intolerable combination that was formed in the Education Department'⁹. Mr. Earle, an official of the Education Department, had even suggested the early retirement of Professor Bose on pension. This angered Nivedita so much that she 'fired' this letter to G.K. Gokhale:

Such an arrangement — they are cool enough to estimate at Rs. 700 or 800 a month, as if the greatest distinction in research were a thing to be penalised by loss of income! Look at the Education Department, filled at

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid. The words within quotes are those of Swami Vivekananda. Nivedita used them in her letter with acknowledgment to her Master.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., p. 871; letter dated 1 August 1907.

3. An embarrassed Minto readily accepted Fuller's resignation in August 1906.

4. *Letters*, vol. 2, p. 864; letter dated 8/9 June 1907 to Mr. S.K. Ratcliffe.

5. Ibid., p. 865; letter dated 9 June 1907 to Miss MacLeod.

£ 200 to £ 1000 or even £ 1200, with men who could with difficulty in England earn £ 70 to £ 100 a year, while this man, because he is Indian, apparently is to be put on the footing of the lowest of these!¹⁰

Nivedita strongly felt that *Deputation* is one thing that Bose should have been granted by the Education Department. She informed Gokhale in the same letter that she was trying for *deputation* on behalf of Bose, that she had already requested Bhupen Bose to help in this regard and that 'it would be my desire to move heaven and earth' so that Bose could be favoured with *deputation*. Having given a description of what she had already done on behalf of Bose, Nivedita writes with exasperation:

Upto the present, I do not know what success Bh. B. [Bhupen Bose] has had. Lord Avebury wrote that he would bring the matter to the notice of Morley and a friend of Lord Minto's in England wrote personally to him. But it seems impossible to get the matter past Fraser.¹¹

At long last, after much trying,¹² Dr. J.C. Bose was granted furlough instead of deputation and in a letter to Gokhale which she signed in conclusion as Nivedita the Furious, Nivedita observed:

When I reflect that this country in INDIA,

and see how foreigners can batten on her bounty, while a child of the soil may have to undergo privations in his service of her that amount to punishment, I am exasperated. How right L.L.R. [Lala Lajpat Rai?] was in asking if the English had brought the land down from the skies!¹³

Nivedita wrote to Gokhale to warn him

Nivedita: 'We are gradually finishing the gigantic labour of the Bairn's [her pet name of Bose] book on Botany. We are now working over the conclusion.... We work now 3 and sometimes 4 days a week from 8 A.M. till 5/30 P.M. with an hour or two omitted for meals. And in the holidays we do almost more than this, everyday. You can imagine how exhausted we both are --- for this has been going on continuously since the beginning of October 1904. But then, on the other hand, one's love and pride are more than satisfied for 20 years hence, when they have had time to understand it all, they will say that the Science of Botany was revolutionized by a Hindu.' (Nivedita's letter dated 22 November 1906 to Miss MacLeod.) See also p. 1209 of *Letters* for reference to her help in writing 12 chapters of a new book by Professor J.C. Bose.

The true significance of all the help that Nivedita offered to J.C. Bose comes out most clearly in the context of the following observation of hers:

'And for my part I always feel that the greatness of India cannot be disputed, if we understand the value of his [Bose's] work — in as much as with all that is against her in the present age, the Motherland has given to the world *such* gifts of religion and science. All other great men here have been great by their service to India herself. They work within a more limited circle. But in Religion Vivekananda and in Science Bose, have made offerings to the World.' See *Letters*, vol. 2, p. 1236; letter dated 13 September 1911 to Miss MacLeod.

13. *Letters*, vol. 2, p. 867; letter dated 19 July 1907.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. It should be emphasized here that Nivedita was active throughout her life on behalf of Bose helping him to compose even his scientific writings not because Dr. Bose was a mere friend of hers but because she considered Bose as a phenomenon — 'the triumph of India in scientific conquest'. Fighting for Bose or working for Bose was therefore, to Nivedita, a work for her beloved India. (*Letters*, vol. 2, p. 868.) See also p. 763 of *Letters* for the proof that she helped Bose in writing his book on Botany in the spirit that the science of Botany was revolutionized by a Hindu. To quote the exact words of

that even he was not safe from this government: 'They say that even you are scarcely safe'.¹⁴ Nivedita's sad conclusion on the state of affairs in India upto this period of Minto's *regime* in India came out with a sigh when she wrote: 'What strange times we live in!'¹⁵ 'The Government anti-Indian.... things are as bad as can be'¹⁶.

II

Nivedita was absent from India for two years — from the middle of August 1907 to the middle of July 1909, and we do not see Minto figuring in her letters directly or even obliquely during this period.¹⁷ Nivedita re-

turned to India — her 'home'¹⁸, as she calls it, in the third week of July 1909, only to be a witness to a horrid scene on her landing in Bombay. The vividness with which she describes the scene of her return to Minto's India¹⁹ and the note of sarcasm that one finds in her account deserves to be fully quoted, for no other language can convey the message as effectively as Nivedita's own:

I reached home. How wonderful it was! From the moment of landing at Bombay it was a rapture....

Landing was a lesson, however, in many ways. All the wonderful rules about duty on fire arms and ammunition led you to imagine that *no arms of any kind* are in future to enter India except under heavy embargo, or in well-defined cases. The laws are treated as a

14. Ibid., p. 892; letter dated 1 August 1907.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., p. 867; letter dated 20 July 1907.

17. This does not, of course, mean that Nivedita was non-active in this period. She kept herself busy in the West seeking support from sympathetic Europeans for the Indian cause, organizing pro-Indian lobby and helping, during her lecture tour to the USA in the months of September–December 1908, the fugitive Indian revolutionaries such as Bhupendranath Dutta in the USA. Lizelle Reymond gives the following revealing account of Nivedita's activities during the period of her two years' exile from India which extended over the several countries of Europe and also the United States of America:

'What her function in London was: it was to act as liaison officer between the scattered Indian nationalist centres in England, on the continent, and in America, and to recognize by clandestine methods the publication and distribution in India of the banned newspapers. Her various journeys were in accord with these activities, though she tried to adduce other reasons to explain them. For example, her journey to Ireland in September 1908, to see her recently married brother, coincided exactly with the proposals of mutual assistance made by the

Irish separatist journalists to the editors of Bengal.... In the United States she filled two roles: that of journalist and lecturer, and that of mother to many Hindu youths who, with the help of Mrs. Bull, were studying there and had been joined by political exiles in the past year. Bhupendranath Dutt, his prison term ended, was one of these exiles.' See *The Dedicated*, (Madras: Samata Books, 1985), pp. 340–1.

18. *Letters*, vol. 2, p. 984; letter dated 21 July 1909 to Mr. S.K. Ratcliffe.

19. Though initially hesitant about pursuing repressive measures as evidenced in his acceptance of Fuller's resignation in August 1906, Minto allowed repressive measures to grow in intensity since 1907–1908. The major instruments forged including banning of 'seditious' meetings in specific areas (May and November 1907), newspaper acts enabling seizure of presses (June 1908, February 1910), the Criminal Law Amendment Act of December 1908 which permitted ban on the principal *samitis* in Bengal, and deportations (Lajpat and Ajit Singh in May 1907, nine Bengal leaders in December 1908). See Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India: 1885–1947* (Madras: MacMillan, 1983), p. 138.

dead letter in the case of Europeans, and are enforced against Indians in a fashion that amounts to a species of moral torture. My agents (Grindlays) undertook to meet me at the station with my luggage, and would not even accept my keys. They would be quite unnecessary!! In the case of one's friends however, every box would be opened and examined and the uttermost farthing rigorously extracted without any respect of persons. In our particular case, this unpleasantness was fortunately and with difficulty avoided — but as I crossed the pavement, I saw the officers on their knees over a pitiful little steel trunk, of the usual type, about 2½ ft. by 1½, containing a towel-soap and such trifles for the most part as you and I might put into a head-bag. There was such a ferocity, in the kneeling examiners, that I said, in the hope of shaming them, 'That's an innocent-looking box!' They looked up, in amusement, 'Yes! but you see IT'S AN NATIVE'S!' they said, as if it would be an obvious crime, in that case, to treat it with courtesy — and then one saw there two stalwart Europeans holding up to the light and examining this way and that a pathetic little trinket-stand of bevel-edged glass and gilt that the owner was evidently taking home to a young wife. I wondered how long such men would refrain from pilfering things of this nature, and the defencelessness of their victims! It appears that Bhola's trunks were searched on his arrival, and his personal letters as well as other mss. abstracted and held back for translation and reading!!! Similar treatment was meted out doubtless to L. Lajpat Rai. I don't think anything can well be done about all this. I have not the slightest doubt that even such laws can be evaded, if people chose to make a science of the matter — and their net result will be only an embittering of relations from the moment of arrival onwards. But as a spectacle, to see people landing *in their own country* in this fashion is remarkable. Bombay in 1660 and the same place in 1909 offers an instructive contrast.²⁰

Referring to the deportation of nine leaders and the possibility of deportation of Aurobindo Ghose, the leader of the Nationalists, Nivedita wonders in her letter of 5 August 1909 as to how indefinitely the Government of Minto was going to extend the process of ruling the country with repressive measures such as deportation. Such a Government, she thought, did not have any moral strength and that *it* rested only on penal strength and the positive measures based on such strength only.²¹

A month later we find Nivedita expressing satisfaction over the fact that good sense prevailed over the Government and that, at the instance of Baker, the deportations were discontinued:

It is said that Baker absolutely refused to consent to any further deportations, and that Risley or whatever other fool was in power, believes India will humble about their ears because this prevents the seizure and imprisonment of — SURENDRA NATH!!! Isn't it like Risley? Such perspicacity!

They say Baker is really strong — however unpleasant — and this is a certain comfort.²²

It should be noted here that while Nivedita expressed her satisfaction over Baker's role in calling a halt to the governmental policy of deportation, she regretted that the Government still could not countenance any mention of boycott²³ and that Baker, an Irishman, had, after all, agreed to 'enslave' himself at the service of England.²⁴

Nivedita's dislike for the British Government and its police finds a contemptuous and sarcastic expression when she writes:

20. *Letters*, vol. 2, pp. 984–5; letter dated 21 July 1909 to Mr. S.K. Ratcliffe.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 934.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 1007; letter dated 16 September 1909.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 1016; letter dated 30 September 1909.

24. *Ibid.*

A new series of arrests have been made, within the last few days — on the score of dacoity — and it seems as if we may be in for a new and prolonged trial on the Alipur scale. Much of it sounds obviously got up, by the police, who are innumerable, and must be fed!²⁵

As another instance of police and governmental high-handedness, Nivedita mentions how the October 1909 issues of the *Review of Reviews*, edited by William T. Stead, which contained certain articles on India, were seized by the police after raiding the shops which contained the magazines.²⁶

In the face of such police repression, Nivedita observes that boycott²⁷ must continue to be the answer of the people of Bengal and that 'the party that really matters must needs work underground — and speak only by deeds'²⁸. This observation demonstrates Nivedita's belief that extremism and underground revolutionism were but outgrowths of the governmental policy of repression. This also shows her faith in extremist and revolutionary politics for the independence of the country. Referring to the Moderates as 'the Gentle Party' she observes in the same breath that 'the Gentle Party have no gumption'²⁹.

That it is the governmental tyranny and oppression resulting from it which made the way for the emergence and growth of terrorism is a recurring theme in the letters of Sister Nivedita. We find her asserting it all over again in January 1910:

It is growing very clear to me that oppression such as now reigns here, making every word of honest criticism into sedition, is really, whatever it may look like, a blow aimed at Moderation. Only a few slaves continue to

whine. Men of real independence are driven to silence. And the only movement that has room to grow is the secret propaganda of terrorism and revolution.³⁰

Referring to the assassination of Shamsul Alam, the police officer (on 24 January 1910), Nivedita observes that the said assassination brought the repressive Minto Government to their wit's end and not knowing what to do and not being able to cow down the revolutionary terrorists so far, they would probably answer with even greater repression:

The last assassination of a police officer of some sort in the High Court has startled everyone, and they say that the result will be repressive legislation of such a type that 'in five years Bengal will be prostrate' and this means never to rise again! I expect it will be the liberty of the press that will be attacked. But as this has already been severely handled, the difficulty is to see that could be done further. I expect they are at their wit's end and groping about like everyone else.³¹

The more repressive the Minto Government became the more nervous it felt when its repression bounced back to it in the form of terrorist assassinations. The sense of uncertainty which gripped the Government of Minto finds at once a pathetic and comical expression in the writings of Nivedita:

Someone says the Government now is nothing but a tower of Babel, and *whatever* it does will worsen things! Is it really so? This last assassination is said to have demoralised the detective force, who now tremble for their lives. Besides this, there is the inevitable discontent within the department, due to the fact that foreign masters know not whom to trust or distrust, and in a period of crisis, persist in the grudging and suspicious attributes of severe discipline. Minto, visiting Goa the other day, insisted by treaty on the incarceration of

25. Ibid., p. 1028; letter dated 3 November 1909.

26. Ibid., p. 1034; letter dated 25 November 1909.

27. Ibid., p. 1033.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., p. 1058; letter dated 20 January 1910 to Mr. S.K. Ratcliffe.

31. Ibid., p. 1062; letter dated 2 February 1910.

½ a dozen Bengali workmen employed in building there, by an English firm. They were imprisoned during his stay and released afterwards, to a sudden blaze of glory and friendly curiosity. The Gov. is transferring Madrassis here, in every department and *vice versa*. Is this not a very doubtful policy?

Well, well, I wonder if this is enough. What bolt will fall next, no one knows.³²

III

We find Nivedita expressing her first ever 'soft' views on Minto on 10 February 1910, when she compares Minto with Curzon. Anybody would look good to Nivedita in comparison with Curzon who, in her opinion, was a 'dreadful Viceroy'³³, 'oppressive and tyrannical'³⁴ and 'the incarnation of insolence and evil'³⁵. The General Elections in England were drawing near and Nivedita apprehended that Curzon might be appointed the 'Secretary of State for India'³⁶ in the event of the Tories winning the General Elections in England. Such foreboding led Nivedita to write indignantly the following:

I fear Minto is going back. I fancy the poor man is un-nerved, by all he had passed through — while that fool of a Curzon continues to babble! I wonder he doesn't hide his head! Does he think poor little *Minto* is responsible for the new condition?³⁷

32. Ibid., p. 1064; letter dated 10 February 1910 to Mr. S.K. Ratcliffe.

33. Ibid., p. 540.

34. Ibid., p. 647.

35. Ibid., p. 726.

36. Ibid., p. 1032; letter dated 25 November 1909.

37. Ibid., p. 1065; letter dated 10 February 1910.

The nervousness of Minto finds a more explicit expression in the following observation of Nivedita:

'They say Minto is frightened to death — as well the poor soul may be and will return at once — leaving the Viceregal risks to Baker.... And this is only natural, I sup-

Herein, for the first time, we hear Nivedita telling us that despite all the repressive measures that Minto had undertaken, he was really a victim of the circumstances created by Curzon, and that Curzon, rather than Minto, was the real villain of the piece. Nivedita leaves one in no doubt whatever as to this thesis of hers about Minto when she writes on 21 March 1910:

Minto has certainly minimised the difficulties of the situation to the utmost. Of course, there has been a shocking amount of repressive legislation, but one has always felt the presence of the Viceroy at the helm of affairs has been an impediment to the speed, and not an accelerator. Minto with his habitual gentleness and courtesy has made the very best of an impossible situation and the attempt on his life at Ahmedabad seems like an aberration of the national intellect. We have cause to be most thankful that we had a Viceroy this time from Canada, with an instinct for trying to meet the people half-way. The councils are a farce, it is true, and the deportees have been in prison, but you and I know whose fault all these things are.³⁸

There were two factors, it seems, behind the mellowed tone of Nivedita vis-à-vis Minto as expressed in the observation quoted above. First, she suspected that the next Viceroy was being appointed and she was afraid that the departure of Minto — after all, a gentle and courteous man — was likely to bring in a worse man at the helm of affairs in India. She gave expression to this fear of hers in the following words: 'I dread

pose, I daresay none of us would enjoy the hourly risk of a shot!' Ibid., p. 1067.

Nivedita informs us further that the authorities became so nervous 'in consequence of recent terrible events' (Ibid., p. 1070) that 'one hears secretly that the police are making out list of names — 300 to 500 already collected — of dangerous persons. I fancy these are the people and the Groups.' Ibid., p. 1078.

38. Ibid., p. 1082; letter dated 31 March 1910.

another coach-and-four-Viceroy, ... another reign of Curzon, with news of fresh assassinations everyday!³⁹

Secondly, her meeting with Lady Minto, the Vicereine, which took place at the initiative of the Vicereine herself, had some effect in terms of mellowing her criticisms of Minto. Since this meeting was supposed to have some significance as well in terms of lessening the police watch and police harassments of Nivedita, it is necessary that we make some elaborate discussion of this meeting, as far as possible, in Nivedita's own words, in the interest of providing documentation to some of the facts described here.

It seems that there were two reasons behind Lady Minto's initiative in meeting Nivedita. First, she was 'interested', as she herself states, 'in penetrating into the poorest part of Calcutta to visit a Miss Noble, who has adopted the Indian mode of life and calls herself Sister Nivedita'⁴⁰. The second and more compelling reason was that, shaken by the bomb attack at Ahmedabad on her husband, she wanted to see for herself whether Nivedita had any knowledge of or connection with such attacks. That she might have had such a motive could be seen from the fact that she hid her identity from Nivedita till the end of her meeting, disclosing who she was only before leaving the premises of Nivedita. As she herself says in her book, 'I went incognito with an American, a Mrs. Phillipson and Victor Brooke [her aide], to see the School, where Sister Nivedita teaches a class of girls ... As I was leaving, I told her I was the Viceroy's wife, which surprised her greatly.'⁴¹

That there was some investigation indeed to do of Nivedita could be seen from the fact reported in Nivedita's letters. The meeting between Lady Minto and Nivedita took place on 2 March 1910 at Nivedita's Bose Para Lane residence at Baghbazar. Within a week of this meeting, Nivedita, at the express wish of the Vicereine, arranged for her a boat ride to Dakshineswar which she enjoyed very much. But the very next morning, as we see from Nivedita's letters, Lady Minto visited the Belur Math with Cornelia Sorabji where Cornelia 'asked a number of direct questions. What was my connection, were they interested in certain things and so on. This seems to me sheer impertinence, which would have been impossible had I been present'.⁴² This *interrogation* by Cornelia in the company of Lady Minto becomes revealing when we read the following observation of Nivedita: 'Cornelia may now be regarded as more or less definitely in the secret service.'⁴³

What was Nivedita's perception of the benefit that accrued from the Vicereine's visit? In September 1909, Nivedita heard that 'I am down in the annals of the C.I.D. as having been the inspirer of *Jugantar*'⁴⁴. During her stay in Darjeeling in October-November 1909, she suspected that she was being watched by the secret service men and women. To quote from her letter of 3 No-

42. *Letters*, vol. 2, p. 1077; letter dated 10 March 1910 to Mr. and Mrs. S.K. Ratcliffe.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 1078; letter dated 10 March 1910 to Miss J. MacLeod.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 1016; letter dated 30 September 1909. *Jugantar* was a revolutionary paper, which the government thought, was spreading sedition in the country. When its editor, Bhupendranath Dutta, was arrested by the government in July 1907, Nivedita offered bail for him. This fact, which led *Englishman* to call Nivedita 'a traitor to her race', might have caused the suspicion of the government towards Nivedita.

39. *Ibid.*

40. Mary Countess of Minto, *India, Minto and Morley, 1905-1910* (London: Macmillan, 1934), quoted in Pravrajika Atmaprana, *Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 1977), p. 229.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 229-30.

vember 1909: 'At the beginning of October [1909] secret service men and women were added here in Darjeeling. I have to refuse many strange visitors.'⁴⁵ It is in such a context that Nivedita thought that the Vicereine's visit with her 'ought for the next few months to relieve us of the constant harassment of the police'⁴⁶ The visit relieved her friend Dr. J.C. Bose even more than Nivedita. 'B. [Bose] is so relieved. The police had been growing dreadfully troublesome and he so wanted us to have official friends'⁴⁷, writes Nivedita.

As for having 'official friends' or friends in high places, it should be pointed out here that Nivedita had an opportunity of making friendship with Lady Minto way back in March 1907. Interested in doing work for the education of Indian women, Lady Minto, Nivedita writes in her letter of 14 March 1907, 'made a round-about attempt to meet me this last week. I of course kept out of it'⁴⁸. Nivedita's reason for 'keeping out of it' was her thinking that Lady Minto's attempt to associate with her was 'mischievous'⁴⁹. In elaborating her point she made an observation which deserves to be quoted for its importance:

I think what is done by the People themselves for themselves is well done.... My

whole world of appeal lies in the People. Morally, I am one of them. And to be identified even remotely with the rulers would be to lose not to gain in helpfulness.⁵⁰

Did Nivedita budge from the position as stated above when she accepted exactly three years later, Lady Minto's invitation to tea at the Government House? Before answering this question, let us see how Nivedita herself describes her invitation from Lady Minto in her letter of 17 March 1910 to Miss J. MacLeod:

I was almost forgetting to tell you that tomorrow we go by special invitation to see Lady Minto at noon. So you see, we are quite magnificent now! I think she really enjoyed the expedition also in the little boat, which you will understand. She has asked us to bring her some swadeshi biscuits and we are also going to sacrifice to her a sketch from Ajanta by one of the clever young artists of the new school. This last at Bairn's [J.C. Bose's] request. I do not know that anything less would have induced me to part with it.⁵¹

It should be made very clear that, to a casual reader, the words of Sister Nivedita quoted above may sound like a shift in the position of someone who had stated firmly in March 1907 that 'I have no desire to see Ly. Minto ... and [I] am determined on [this]'⁵². In 1907 it was a question of working with Lady Minto, cooperating with her on a sustained, long-term basis. In 1910 it was only a matter of returning a courteous social visit, with no question of long-term cooperation being involved in it. Whatever might have been on the mind of Lady Minto as to Nivedita's involvement in the nationalist activities and her motive to make a personal investigation of the things she heard about Nivedita from police and other sources, Nivedita, clean in her mind, saw in Lady

45. Ibid., p. 1028.

46. Ibid., p. 1074; letter dated 3 March 1910.

47. Ibid., p. 1076. Actually, on the day of Lady Minto's visit to Dakshineswar, she came straight to 93, Upper Circular Road, residence of Jagadish and Abala Bose, to pick Nivedita up from there. This must have happened at the request of Nivedita who took this opportunity to introduce the Boses to the Vicereine. To quote Nivedita, 'So she [Lady Minto] was glad to come in and BO [Abala Bose] and Dr. Bose were presented.' Ibid., p. 1079.

48. Ibid., p. 851; letter dated 14 March 1907 to Mrs. J. MacLeod.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid., p. 1080.

52. Ibid., p. 850.

Minto nothing but 'a motherly woman'⁵³ whose concern for the well-being of her husband was only too natural a thing, indeed, a thing as it should be or, as Nivedita put it, 'a perfect thing'⁵⁴. Thus, visiting Lady Minto, Nivedita did not feel any hesitation in accepting her invitation. Moreover, it is apparent from Nivedita's letters that she appreciated Lady Minto's charming manners and, if we are to trust Lady Minto's account as given in her book, she too admired Nivedita, writing of her that 'she has a charming face, with a very intelligent expression, and we made friends'⁵⁵

We see from the record left in Nivedita's letters that she had 'tea' with Lady Minto on 18 March 1910. There are two things to be noted specially in the letter that Nivedita wrote a few days after this social intercourse, precisely speaking, on 31 March⁵⁶ to the Ratcliffes. First, the letter highlighted the agreement between Lady Minto and Nivedita to this effect that Curzon (who was misleading the people in England as to his achievements as the Viceroy of India) should be exposed in England and that S.K. Ratcliffe should be used for such a purpose in England. The second prominent feature of Nivedita's letter of 31 March is her sympathetic assessment of Minto to this effect that despite all his repressive measures, he had, after all, made the very best that could be made out of a bad situation that was created in the first instance by the tyrannical and temperamental Curzon. This letter of Nivedita is definitely different from all others she wrote so far, reflecting on Minto and the policies of his regime. The usual

criticism of Minto's policies are still there, but the tone is not only subdued but also positively sympathetic, especially where Nivedita regrets the attempt on Minto's life at Ahmedabad and censures the 'national intellect' for the same. It seems that their common animus against Curzon and the mutual liking that Lady Minto and Nivedita developed out of their social intercourse had its impact on Nivedita's 31 March letter inducing her to write 'softly' of Minto, at least for the time being.

IV

It seems that during her meeting with Nivedita over 'tea' at the Government House, Lady Minto expressed her worries to Nivedita over police keeping watch over her and requested Nivedita to see the Commissioner of Police on this. That Nivedita obliged Lady Minto in this regard could be seen from her letter of 6 April 1910 to Mrs. Bull:

There is plenty of news, but impossible to discuss in a letter. Ly. Minto who is a sweet woman, so set her heart on my seeing the Commissioner of Police that I simply had to do so that week. He very thoughtfully asked me to his home instead of to his office. We had a solitary cup of tea with him on his verandah. He was perfectly charming. Of course, one does not know how far he was wholehearted, but we seemed to get on beautifully and that so much nicer than if he had told us he thought it disgraceful to live in the Native Quarter. Of course something was due to Her Excellency's friends. Ly. M's [Minto's] last words to me were, 'Do go on writing'.⁵⁷

We have more information on Nivedita's meeting with the Police Commissioner from what Nivedita wrote to the Ratcliffes:

Oh — to oblige our new and exalted friend [Lady Minto] — we saw Halliday [the Police Commissioner] and had tea with him.

53. Ibid., p. 1077.

54. Ibid.

55. *India, Minto and Morley, 1905-1910* as quoted by Pravrajika Atmaprana in *Sister Nivedita, op. cit.*, p. 230.

56. A reference to this letter with appropriate citations from the same has already been made.

57. *Letters*, vol. 2, pp. 1084-85.

He says he knows 'the police are devils, and watching is tommy rot'. But his superiors compel him. This is surprising!⁵⁸

Our only comment on the information provided by Nivedita is that it is not only surprising, but intriguing as well. Nivedita was made to see the Commissioner of Police by the Mintos. We say 'Mintos' because Lady Minto could not have asked Nivedita to do so without her husband's knowledge and yet when Nivedita did what she was requested to do, the Police chief told her that police had to the devilish act of keeping her under surveillance at the order of his superiors. Does it mean that the Mintos were still suspicious of Nivedita and that they wanted the police to watch and investigate? We cannot say for certain whether this was the case or not. We can only point to circumstance on the basis of documentary evidence.

That the harassments of Nivedita by police or otherwise did not lesson *even* after her meeting with Lady Minto and the Commissioner of Police, that her post was still being censored and that she was receiving her letters and packets completely or partially torn could be seen from what Nivedita had to complain to the Post-Master General on 17 April 1910:

Dear Sir,

It is of course easy to understand the overwhelming curiosity of some members of your staff about the confidence of my sister in regard to her babies and her cooking. I should be grateful however if you would kindly instruct them to *close up again* the letters they have opened and read. I should like to avoid the irritations as well as the possible loss of letters, which their present methods engender! I have been at great pains to keep the enclosed envelope in the exact condition in which I received it this morning — but I have a long list of grievances in accumulation halves of first pages carelessly torn, with the wrappers off literary papers, & so on. I shall

venture to hope that this letter, of which I keep a copy, may reach you personally.⁵⁹

As early as 3 March 1902, Nivedita became aware of the fact that 'the police have taken authority to open my letters'⁶⁰. Exactly a year later, that is, on 3 March 1903 she received a similar hint leading her to write to Miss J. MacLeod:

Since I received the hint that came today, I feel that I shall do more and more of my talking in print and less and less in correspondence. I do not propose to produce literature for the sole enjoyment of detectives. I think I might make business arrangements largely on postcards. These do not awaken curiosity. Only I wish I could get stiff ones — so they will not be intercepted.⁶¹

We see from Nivedita's letter seven years later that the authoritative surveillance of her mails continued. The fact that she was Her Excellency Lady Minto's friend did not lead to any abatement over this!

There is candid admission in Nivedita's letter dated 28 April 1910 that she was still being watched by the police and that her meeting with Halliday, the Commissioner of Police, had the effect only of changing the old crude way of watching for a more sophisticated one:

I had such a cut in the side of a letter a week or two back that I sent it to the PMG asking him to order that my letters should be *closed again* after reading. He sent me a registered reply and a visitor — and I gathered that my name is on no list of rebels or suspects — but that they are practically powerless to prevent thieving and tampering in trains and at sea. I understand the situation better, but cannot say that I am reassured about my correspondence. If you should ever want to send me anything very serious, I should advise a letter — enclosing it sealed — to my agents, asking them to instruct me that it awaited my

58. Ibid., pp. 1087–88; letter dated 7 April 1910.

59. Ibid., p. 1091.

60. *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 458.

61. *Letters*, vol. 2, p. 545.

personal call. They might want stamps enclosed, to reimburse them — but English stamps would do. This is only in case of some extraordinary emergency ever occurring.

Grave news was brought to our friend the other evening that I am put down in the accounts of the Unspoken Wisdom Department as absolutely responsible for inspiring what? The dacoities, if you please! *So I am watched — not in the old crude way* [emphasis added] since we saw Halliday and rather enjoyed him — but by a supremely clever man who has orders to travel with me....

However, you will understand that meantime I can see no one — for to come here would be as bad for them as for me to go anywhere.⁶²

V

Despite all the sympathy that Nivedita expressed for Minto in her letter of 31 March 1910, arising, as we have tried to show, out of her animus against Curzon and her association with Lady Minton, it did not take her long to come back to the stringent criticisms of the British administration as it was under Minto. She was particularly critical of the gagging of the press which she considered to be 'awful and unthinkable'⁶³. It was unthinkable to her that the police could cook up the charge of dacoity against an honest journalist like Ramananda Chatterjee, the Editor of *Modern Review*, to stifle his voice of independence. Nivedita requested her friend, S.K. Ratcliffe, to 'please be ready, in case anything happens to Ramananda, to do what you can'⁶⁴. She also appealed to Rat-

cliffe 'to get at the King'⁶⁵ so that the King uses his personal influence to 'demand the absolute repeal of the press acts'⁶⁶. Giving a description as to how the police conducted the raid on the alleged offices of select press and as to how they seized the recent issues of *Jugantar*, Nivedita wrote to Ratcliffe: 'You have no idea how the press is being gagged, nor how men are kept in prison without trial and then — no evidence — dismissed!⁶⁷ With heinous practices such as these, Nivedita thought, the Minto Government was proving itself to be 'Russian to the core'⁶⁸. She went on to observe that 'the real fact is *authority are dishonestly using forces entrusted to them for suppression of sedition in order to ruin all known to sympathise with Swadeshi*. Scores have been ruined.'⁶⁹

About 20 arrests for so-called dacoity and sedition — some out of obvious malice against certain papers — were made around

64. Ibid., p. 1107.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid., p. 1106.

67. Ibid., p. 1113; letter dated 13 July 1910.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.

It should be added here that equally disgusted with the police regulations, Nivedita observed that 'the country is out of its mind with police regulations'. She gave a funny example of the ridiculous length to which such regulations were extended. One old woman on a pilgrimage was kept 24 hours in *durance vile* because she could give the name of her village and tell how (as: change at Lucknow — and 8 miles further) to get there, but did not know the name of the district or the head police thana. Giving this funny example, Nivedita observes, 'of course, if I had been there it would not I think have been well for the police — but one of our monks argued for an hour, without effect — and *anyway similar things must be happening everywhere*' [emphasis added]. *Letters*, vol. 2, p. 1107.

62. Ibid., pp. 1092–93; letter dated 28 April 1910 to Mr. and Mrs. S.K. Ratcliffe.

63. Ibid., p. 1105; letter dated 6 July 1910 to Mr. Ratcliffe.

She was also severely critical of the policy of stifling the voice of the press which showed the slightest independence. See also her letter dated 7 April 1910, *ibid.*, p. 1087.

the middle of July 1910 and this left the country, observes Nivedita, 'full of distress'.⁷⁰ Even Nivedita was not spared, with the Detective Department spreading the malice that she was an inspiration behind all the so-called *Swadeshi* dacoities. This only meant, observes Nivedita, 'that they would suppress me also, if they could'.⁷¹ Having given these instances of governmental atrocities, Nivedita cautioned her friend Ratcliffe not to think that:

I am relating our grievances. I am merely recounting a few straws that may indicate what is going on. If you had been here now, I think they would have prisoned. [For] you would have been such a stumbling block.⁷²

So, how must the 'achievements' of Minto's regime be summed up? The answer is: the thorough gagging of the press, the Seditious Meetings Act to stop all public meetings, the rise in expenditure on secret services in Bengal alone from Rs. 56 lakhs to Rs. 100 lakhs a year.⁷³ And as for *reforms* made during Minto's regime, they were more apparent than real. A summing up such as this has been made in Nivedita's letter of 10 August 1910 to S.K. Ratcliffe.⁷⁴ This document stands out as one of the sharpest political pronouncements in the indictment of Viceroy Minto. The document also stands out at one and the same time as a testament of hope for the rise anew of an ancient but oppressed nation that was India.

70. Ibid., p. 1118; letter dated 28 July 1910 to S.K. Ratcliffe.

In a comment highly revealing of the prevailing situation, Nivedita observes, 'you can see that the government has thrown the country into a very pretty state of war. We all laugh when we meet but we all know that no man can tell whose turn will be next'. Ibid., p. 1115.

71. Ibid., p. 1119.

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid., p. 1120.

74. Ibid., pp. 1126–28.

As such a document of unending importance, this document deserves to be quoted at length:

You [i.e. Ratcliffe] speak of the way in which Government has been modified by the Reform Sch. [Scheme]. Say rather the way in which it might *seem* to have been modified or *theoretically* modified. Personally, I don't believe it has been altered in the least....⁷⁵

The really grave feature of the present situation is the SILENCE. The Press has been gagged — in a manner not to be imagined in civilised countries. All public meetings are stopped — the Seditious Meetings Act has just been extended at Simla. Baker forbade demonstrations on Sunday last, the 7th — and everyday arrests and searches and the oppression of prisoners to make them into

75. Ibid., p. 1126.

This demolishes effectively Lady Minto's claim, as made in her book, that Nivedita spoke 'gratefully of the Reforms and the sympathetic treatment Indians had received during Minto's regime'. See Lady Minto as quoted by Pravrajika Atmaprana in *Sister Nivedita, op. cit.*, pp. 229–30.

The reforms known as 'Morley-Minto reforms' referred only to the Provincial and Central legislatures, increasing their right of criticism, but doing little more worthwhile. The Executive was left more or less unchanged and the elected representatives of the legislature were not given any chance of ever taking office. The so-called *reforms* had no intention whatsoever of introducing a parliamentary system in India. As Morley candidly acknowledged in the House of Lords, 'If I were attempting to set up a parliamentary system in India, or if it would be said that this chapter of reforms led directly or necessarily up to the establishment of a parliamentary system in India, I, for one, would have nothing at all to do with it.' — E. Thompson and G.T. Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India* (Allahabad: Central Book Dept, 1969), pp. 582–3.

informers going on. Much of the information given in this way is of course worthless — but none the less serious to parties — accused — who are kept in prison endlessly, awaiting trial, and then, as I understand it, tried *in camera*, without counsel or witnesses!!! Lady M. [Minto] thinks her husband will go down to history as having given India a *parliament*, but poor thing it is a toy-parliament. The Mahratha [Gokhale] Counts on primary education free and compulsory from it. He is a fool. I was present for ½ an hour at the Council when he moved it, and I wish you could have the pitying smiles and frank amusement of the War-Chief gathered about the door. The Head of the State of course listened respectfully, being noted for courtesy and tact....⁷⁶

All this determined policy is to crush *Swadeshi* — which is said to have been done.... The Inquisition of the Secret Ten was never more oppressive than the present *regime*. A prohibited book — an awkward name on a fly leaf — a copy of the Karma Yogin — any of these is enough to hale a man before the judge — or to put him in prison awaiting trial. Just fancy! We are living in the midst of these things! Russia, or the reigns of the Tudors.⁷⁷

The indictment of the Minto *regime* was followed by the indictment of the British *Imperialism in general*. In words which are pithy and precise indeed, Nivedita brings out the aggressive designs and character of the British imperialism:

The English are steering for the rapids. They act as if *Asia* loved them. Even if they have design on Persia (Col. Ramsden told me that the Head of the Sec. [Secret] Ser. [Service] Col. something or other, had made an expedition to the ruin of Babylon, and publ. [published] secret report. This means looking far ahead!) do they think they can square *China*? Do they think *Asia* will be always weak? One

thing is certain — the clique who rule are actuated by mercantile idea of rapid exploitation, not by true imperialism of giving birth to a brood of daughter-nations, highly vitalised and frankly admiring, as America at this moment is.⁷⁸

Then, finally, came the pronouncement of the inveterate faith and hope in the rise anew of India — 'one of the greatest nations of antiquity':

I think the tide [of the national freedom movement] may ebb in its intensity, but it has left its mark higher on the shore and will return and cover it again. The passion for history is growing, and will not long be put off with the constant silly deprecation of one of the greatest nations of antiquity. Oppressions will do much to *shape* and *discipline* revolt — a process sadly needed.⁷⁹

VI

Was Nivedita hopeful of Hardinge, the successor of Minto? She was not by any means. Her comments on Hardinge, as noted below, amply demonstrate this. Writing of the repressive measures of Minto on 19/20 July 1910, she suspected that far from scaling these measures down, Hardinge will actually increase them:

Hardinge's face in the papers looks like that of a man who would increase all this. What an iron-set, coach and four physiognomy! He is sure to use it against the people instead of the officials.⁸⁰

Similar comments were made on 28 July 1910 by her on Hardinge's appearance and the likelihood that he will actually intensify the repression let loose on the people by Minto:

I can tell you that it will go hard with us all, when Hardinge rules! That steel-trap

76. *Letters*, vol. 2, pp. 1126-27..

77. *Ibid.*, pp. 1127-28.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 1127.

79. *Ibid.*

80. *Ibid.*, p. 1115.

looking face, and familiarity with Russia!!!⁸¹ Thinking on 28 July itself that Hardinge's was 'likely to be a very bad reign for India,'⁸² she commented two and half months later, on 14 October 1910 to be precise, that under Hardinge 'Civil Service will ride rampant!'⁸³ Nivedita wondered as to how Hardinge will cleanse the Augean Stables of his subordinates' creation on his first arrival in India.⁸⁴

In a severe indictment of the educational policy of the Hardinge-led Government of India and an indictment as well of the policy of the British Government in general with regard to India, which was at one and the same time an impassioned plea for India's intellectual and political freedom, Nivedita gave us, exactly four months before her death⁸⁵, an educational-cum-political testament which must be recognized as a milestone in her social and political thinking on India:

To me, the one [Indian] problem that exists is that of EDUCATION. Is an Indian a human being or not? If he is, he has an inalienable right to the fullest self-development in the highest and best ways of which he is capable — all development of all kinds culminating in freedom — in intellectual freedom. Again, if he is, then humanity itself *demands* this utmost of development on his behalf. 'But political expediency demands that this be thwarted and restrained! Intellectual freedom for the Indian people wd. [would] mean sooner or later *the recognition of the necessity of national freedom also — the right of a nation to determine and to find its own destiny, unimpeded*

and unfettered [emphasis added]. This is not to be thought of — or at least not by *English* people!

Then, in a society that exists for the formulation of ultimate principles, is it to be held that political organisation rightly exists, in order to give effect to intellectual and spiritual potentialities, or in order to limit and restrain them? And if in bulk an ultimate power of limitation can be faced by the imagination of one people, as concerning another, of opposed interests, can we, as individuals, face this in detail?

Do we realise what it means to search houses for contraband literature — to refuse admissions to schools, colleges and degrees — to raise education fees — to mark 'failed' on the maximum number of examination papers — to give questions in the papers that are outside the curriculum, and allow no redress? And all this, with the naked and unashamed motive of subserving the interests of our own class, by the ruin of a great nation?

Who realises that today the Education policy of the Govt. here puts them on a par with the Spanish Inquisition in its palmy days, or the temporal power of the papacy 60 years ago in Italy?⁸⁶

VII

We should like to tag with this testament only one more comment of Nivedita made less than two months before her death, which, we believe, gives us the whole basis of her social and political thought:

...the strength of idealism lies in its basis. It takes its stand on what is *known* the obvious facts of morality. Why should I steal a man's right when I would not steal his property? The highest good of the whole lies ultimately in the good of all.⁸⁷

These were the final words, both political and philosophical, in Nivedita's condemnation of the British rule of India. As

81. Ibid., p. 1119.

82. Ibid., p. 1121.

83. Ibid., p. 1162.

84. Ibid., p. 1212.

85. Nivedita died at Darjeeling on 13 October 1911 uttering the final words that she yet hoped to see the sunrise in an independent India: 'The frail boat is sinking. But I shall yet see the sunrise'. See Pravrajika Atmaprana, *Sister Nivedita, op. cit.*, p. 298.

86. *Letters*, vol. 2, pp. 1204–25; letter dated 12 June 1911 to Mr. and Mrs. S.K. Ratcliffe.

87. Ibid., p. 1221; letter dated 16 August 1911 to Mr. and Mrs. S.K. Ratcliffe.

for *methods* of struggle against the British, all methods — Revolutionary, Extremist, and Moderate — were valid to her so long as they maintained the *unity* in the fight against their common enemy. As Pravrajika Atmaprana so perceptively observes:

As a matter of fact, Nivedita was friendly not only with Sri Aurobindo but with all who thought and worked for the independence of India. Mr. Bipin Chandra Pal, the Extremist leader, was her friend and she frequently contributed articles to his *New India*. The Moderate leaders, Mr. R.C. Dutt and Mr. G.K. Gokhale, were equally on friendly terms with her. Both held liberal views and though Nivedita's radical outlook did not tally with theirs, she was none the less interested in their work and views.... Mr. Gokhale came to 17 Bosepara Lane day after day when he stayed in Calcutta and had long discussions with her on various topics of national interest. ...Thus Nivedita simultaneously took interest in the different ideologies professed by leaders of the Indian community.⁸⁸

As a matter of fact, it was not the *method* so much as the goal of a free India, *United* and therefore strong and powerful as a nation, that was important to Nivedita. Nowhere does this find better expression than in the following where, speaking of her own contribution to the great national awakening, she observes:

Let me plough my furrow across India just as deep, deep, to the very centre of things, as it will go. Let it be either as a hidden voice sending out noiseless things from a cell [a reference to her secret revolutionary work] or as a personality, romping and raging through the big cities [a reference to her open outer political activities] — I don't care. ... India is the starting point, and the goal, as far as I am concerned.⁸⁹ □

88. *Sister Nivedita*, pp. 184–5.

89. *Letters*, vol. 2, p. 582.

The Temple

MS. SUJATHA PADMANABHAN*

*The old ruin stands,
trying best to hold itself together.
But there's hardly a trace left,
To prove that once, a long time ago,
This was a glorious structure
of splendour
A Temple of Goddess Durga.*

*The gopuram is sliced in half.
Enshrined within is the garbhagriha
That echoes through
fathomless darkness,
Strange hissing and hooting sounds.
The gold staff, in what was once
the court-yard,
Must have fallen into greedy hands.*

*Ozymandias flashes across my mind.
I think of his arrogance and pride.
But here, the ruins whisper
a silent message as it were.
It is man who in his frail mortality
Gropes for structures and records
to be remembered.
Bricks and buildings limit him.
Both die.
But, for the Divine Mother,
The whole world is the Temple
wherein She dwells.□*

* The author is of Madras.

Reeds are made that way to bend
and escape from the stormy wind, but
honest men are not.

—Dr. P. Dhanavel, Agartala

Status of Women: A Gandhian View

M.N. BABU

There is much talk both by men and by women about the status of women; yet the situation has not vastly improved. Sri M.N. Babu, in this article, presents some ideas of Mahatma Gandhi in this regard and concludes by saying that 'women-folk throughout the world have had to live with male chauvinism and gender bias. The plethora of systems, i.e. social, economic, cultural and political, are each biased against women. Neither democratization nor the so-called women's liberation movements could address themselves to the real issues. Only through the humanization of the very process of development, considering women as an essential part of society, can this be done.'

We just celebrated the fiftieth year of India's Independence and this has renewed the thought process of the Mahatma Gandhi. The relevance of this thought has become greater and global because of the growing disorderliness in the social, economic, political and moral spheres of life in India and the world. Gandhiji is one of those distinguished personalities in human history whose thoughts on women are of incalculable value. He was not only saintly but also a warrior and so he became a fountain-head of social change in addition to being a lamp for moral and spiritual regeneration. He had an integral vision of civilization and culture. In this respect his views on women is a manifesto for a new world civilization.

The Problem

Under the Constitution, women have been conferred in all matters equal rights with men. There is also a provision in the Constitution against discrimination on the ground of sex, and women, like every citizen, enjoy safeguards against exploitation. A number of laws have been enacted to safeguard women's rights and to promote equality. But women's equal status with men as enshrined in the Constitution and our laws has made only a featherweight impact on the status of women. Gender disparities have accentuated and the gap based on discrimination has widened. Violence in

general and particularly against women has increased.

Incidence of sexual harassment, murder, wife-beating, female infanticide, dowry deaths are on the increase. A data on 'violence against women' in 1991¹ has some alarming facts to reveal. There is one rape every 54 minutes, one molestation every 26 minutes, one kidnapping every 43 minutes, one dowry death every one hour and 42 minutes, one act of cruelty every 33 minutes and eve-teasing every 51 minutes. Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi alone account for 68.3 per cent of the total crimes against women in the country. Over the years since 1991 the situation has only deteriorated further.

Violence against women needs to be understood in the cultural context of gender in India. A girl child is held to be born under a curse. She grows up in a culture which associates negative values towards her as an entity. Indian society is a male-dominated society. Unfortunately, male supremacy is widely accepted by females themselves. Manu's law, defining a woman's position and role, says²:

As daughters, women should obey their

1. *Kurukshetra*, February 1995, p. 33.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

fathers; as wives obey their husbands; and as widows, obey their sons.

Unquestioning obedience has left women with no scope for self-expression and growth.

Victim of Discrimination

Even today the condition of women is not very much changed. She starts working even as a girl, more so when she gets a life-partner, and works on and on from motherhood to grandmotherhood and beyond. A woman is still paid one half to three quarters of the wages a man can earn for doing the same job. Today, a man laying a water pipe in a city is part of the statistics of development, while a woman carrying a day's supply of water from a well to a village is not; her work, though vital to the task of meeting the daily needs of the family, goes unrecorded and unrewarded.

Despite actions taken by the different Governments and the U.N. to focus attention on the status of women the world over, women continue to be both victims of discrimination in society and in politics, at the work-place and in almost every area. Plans and legal instruments have yet to become a reality.

The Ancient Indian Experience

The greatest civilization known to man is the Indus Valley Civilization. Our ancient heritage was rich and varied but harmonious. The Arabs, Chinese, Dutch, Portuguese, French and English, all left behind ingredients of their own culture and enriched themselves with the nation's rich culture and diversity. The people of India showed great hospitality as can be seen in colourful carnivals. We had great people who are exemplars of bravery, tolerance, liberality of outlook and open mindedness. In sciences and arts, philosophy and literature, and music and fine arts, Indians were far ahead of other nations. Indians celebrated and still celebrate many Indian festivals which brought them together as members of one big family.

The highest place was accorded to

woman in India's religious observances. Women excelled in philosophy too. The dominance of the feminine principle pervades Vedic thought. Society in the Vedic period admitted the superiority of woman. Hymn XXI of the *Rig-Veda* praises greatly the virtues of women as being even greater than those of men.³ Throughout the Vedic period, women were given equal status to fight wars, join in festivals, and take part in philosophical discussions. However, during the later period, from 200 BC onwards, we see a degradation in women's status.

Regeneration of Indian Women

According to Gandhi, woman has been kept suppressed under custom and law for which man was responsible; in the shaping of these customs and laws, women had no hand. Based on non-violence, every woman has as much right to shape her own destiny as man has to shape his; to curb human rights to shape its destiny is evidently an act of violence. Men have not realized the truth that the rules of social conduct must be framed by mutual consent and cooperation. It can never be imposed. Men and women have to know their role in society. Men have long considered themselves to be lords and masters of women instead of considering them as their friends and companions. Wives should not be treated as dolls and objects of indulgence, but should be honoured as comrades in common service. To this end, those who have not received a liberal education should receive such instruction as is possible from the liberal-minded.

Legislation has been mostly the handiwork of men and has not always been fair and good to women. It is discriminatory. Gandhiji opined that society will have to produce women who are pure, firm and self-controlled as Sita, Damayanti and Draupadi. A woman ought to have the right to

3. Dr. Girija Khanna and M.A. Varghese, *Indian Women Today* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1978), pp. 1-2.

participate to the minute details in the activities of man and she ought to have an equal right to freedom and liberty. She must be entitled to a supreme place in her own sphere of activity as man is in his. This provides a balance.

Gandhiji accepts that inequality between women and men exists, is unjust, and must be corrected. He raises questions about the meaning of equality, the nature of the family, and the ethical obligations of women and men. Society claims to offer liberty and justice for all, holding that 'all men are created equal'. Gandhiji alleges that the second part of this statement in quotes is accepted literally in our Indian society. He states that man has regarded woman as his tool. She too has learnt to be a tool in his hands and in the end found it easy and pleasurable to be such, because when one drags another down in the latter's fall, the descent is easier than attempting to resist. 'I hold that the right education in this country is to teach woman the art of saying "no" even to her husband, to teach her that it is no part of her duty to become a mere tool or a doll in her husband's hands. She has rights as well as duties.'⁴ In fact, society grants liberty, justice and equality to men recognizing men to have been created equal, but has failed to extend it to women.

Women's Honour

Statistics show that women are the targets of violence in every form both inside and outside the home. They are often subjected to further harassment when they report the initial abuse. Gandhiji sees this as a lack of justice towards women. He held that when a woman is assaulted, she should not stop to think in terms of *himsa* or *ahimsa*. Her primary duty is self-protection. She is at liberty to employ every method or means that comes to her mind in order to defend her honour. God has given her nails and

teeth. She must use them with all her strength and, if need be, die in the effort.⁵ Regarding the world's oldest profession, Gandhiji was totally against the evil practice and said it should be declared illegal.

According to Gandhiji, in a just society, women and men would have equal opportunities to compete in the educational, economic and political arena. Given this opportunity, women would reach high levels of achievement. Gandhiji believed that women have been denied opportunities for achievement because of practices that discriminate against them such as unequal pay and sexual harassment.

Woman, according to Gandhi, is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacities.⁶ By sheer force of a vicious custom, men have been enjoying a superiority over women which they do not deserve and ought not to have. Gandhiji assessed that a modern girl dressed not to protect herself from wind, rain and sun, but to attract attention. She improves upon nature by painting herself and looking extraordinary. That proves to be her undoing.

Gandhiji held that the woman is the queen, not the slave, of the household over which, correctly perceived, she presides. Gandhi's view is that man and woman are one, their problems must be one in essence. The soul in both is the same. The two live the same life, have the same feeling. Each is a complement of the other. The one cannot live without the other's help. Equality of sexes does not mean equality of occupations; it is the recognition that nature has created the two sexes as complements of each other.

The continuing women problem has many and complex causes. Women-folk throughout the world have had to live with

(Continued on page 613)

4. *Harijan*, 2 May 1986, p. 93.

5. *Ibid.*, 1 March 1942, p. 60.

6. R.K. Prabhu and U.R. Rao (ed.) *The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1967), p. 292.

***Sadhu Sammelan* at Haridwar** **in Commemoration of** **the Centenary of the Ramakrishna Mission**

A REPORT BY SWAMI TYAGANANDA, EX-EDITOR, THE VEDANTA KESARI

A *Sadhu Sammelan* (congregation of monks belonging to different Hindu denominations) was organized at Haridwar on **8 April 1998**, to commemorate the centenary of the Ramakrishna Mission. The function was jointly organized by the **Kankhal Centre of the Ramakrishna Mission** and the **Akhil Bharatiya Akhara Parishad**.

The *Sammelan* was preceded by the inauguration of a special exhibition organized in the Sevashrama campus. Revered Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj, a Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Order, inaugurated the exhibition by performing *arati* (waving of lights) before the decorated pictures of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda. The pictorial exhibition depicted incidents from the life of Swami Vivekananda and portrayed the various types of service activities conducted by the Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

From 3 p.m. onwards, monks from different Akharas started converging at the beautiful pandal erected at the Sevashrama. It was verily a sea of ochre colour of various shades. The founders and heads of the various monastic institutions and Akharas — called variously in Uttarakhand by titles such as Mahanta, Mandaleswar, Mahamandaleswar, Acharya Mahamandaleswar, etc. — all arrived one by one. Nearly 800 monks attended, some shaven-headed, some with long hairs, some others with turbans. In spite of this variety, which was easily noticeable, one could also fathom the unity in the monastic inspiration common to all the monks who had assembled. This *Sadhu Sam-*

melan was presided over by Revered Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj, the senior Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Order.

The meeting began at 4 p.m. with Vedic chanting by a few monks of the Ramakrishna Order. Then, Revered Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, welcomed the gathering. He traced the monastic lineage of the Ramakrishna Order, explaining how it belongs to the Puri *sampradaya* of the great *Dashanami* tradition. He also touched on the subject of harmony of religions and said that a sannyasin in the Indian tradition has always been the protector of the *Sanatana Dharma*. His Welcome Address was translated into Hindi by Revered Swami Nikhilatmanandaji Maharaj, Head of the Allahabad Centre of the Ramakrishna Mission.

The first speaker was Sri Jagadguru Kashipeethadiwar Haryacharya Ramanandacharyaji. He gave a spirited talk in Sanskrit, presenting an interesting etymological explanation of the word 'Hindu'. Sri Mahant Ramachand Dasji Paramahansa of Digambar Ani Vaishnav Akhara, speaking next, paid a glowing tribute to the Ramakrishna Mission's activities. He expressed the hope that one day the ochre cloth would be hoisted over the Himalayas and India will once again be a truly Hindu nation.

Mahamandaleswar Swami Nirananandaji Maharaj spoke next. He said that, unlike others, Sri Ramakrishna did not establish any Math or institution, but he gave to the world a 'living institution' in the

person of Swami Vivekanandaji Maharaj. Acharya Mahamandaleswar Sri Swami Gurusharananandaji Maharaj of Udasi Panchayati Bada Akhara asked, 'What new message had Swami Vivekananda given to the world?' and himself answered it by saying that Swamiji taught us that God is not only *inside* the temple; He is also *outside* — in the suffering, the destitute, the ignorant masses.

Next to speak was Acharya Mahamandaleswar Sri Swami Prakashanandaji of Atal Peetha. He referred to Sri Ramakrishna as *Shakta-shiromani* and stressed the power of organization. He invited the *sadhu-sampradaya* to remain united and organized under the inspiration and leadership of Swami Vivekananda. That would be, he said, the best tribute we could pay to Swamiji.

Acharya Mahamandaleswar Sri Swami Shivendra Puri of Avahan Peetha, in his short but impressive speech, said that Vivekananda's advent was more than a hundred years ago, but 'power' never becomes old really and Swamiji was really power, not a human being.' Mahamandaleswar Sri Swami Premanandaji Maharaj pointed out that the Indian soil has always produced illumined saints in every generation.

Mahamandaleswar Swami Mangalananda Giriji Maharaj said in his speech that our religion today should reflect the idea of universal brotherhood as taught by Swami Vivekananda. We may feel that we need another Vivekananda today in today's troubled times, but that is not necessary because Vivekananda is already present in the hearts of all of us.

Acharya Mahamandaleswar Sri Swami Punyanandaji of Niranjani Peetha said that no politician can mobilize a crowd of such magnitude as the *Kumbha Mela*; only

religion can do that. Similarly, no scientist has been able to find a method to produce eternal peace and joy; only religion can do that.

Acharya Mahamandaleswar Sri Swami Viswadevanandaji of Nirvani Peetha said in his speech that the *Sadhu Sammelan* was a great opportunity for self-examination. We could ask ourselves questions such as: 'Who am I?' and 'In which direction are our lives heading?'

Acharya Mahamandaleswar Sri Swami Devanandaji Maharaj of Ananda Peetha also spoke and paid his tribute to Swami Vivekananda.

In his Presidential Address, Revered Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj pointed out the ancient glory of India as well as its degeneration from the 10th century onward. He said that it was Swami Vivekananda who lifted India out of her gloom and despair, and proclaimed the ancient message in a language which modern people can understand. Quoting from the *Srimad Bhagavata*, the Swami said that God will not accept our worship if we neglect Him in human beings. God must be worshipped in all with the non-dual ideal before us. The corruption in today's society can be overcome only by studying Swamiji carefully and putting into practice his message of the harmony of religions and oneness of all creation. His speech was translated into Hindi by Revered Swami Satyarupanandaji Maharaj, Head of the Raipur Centre. He also gave the vote of thanks.

The meeting concluded at 7 p.m. and all the assembled monks were sumptuously fed at the Sevashrama and honoured with a gift of cloth and *dakshina*. The function left a deep and abiding impression on the minds of the monks of various traditions who participated in the *Sadhu Sammelan*. □

They alone live who live for others, the rest are more dead than alive.

—Swami Vivekananda

The Last *Kumbha Mela* of the Century

A REPORT BY SWAMI NIKHILESWARANANDA,
EDITOR, SRI RAMAKRISHNA JYOT

Swami Vivekananda said that the foundation, the backbone, the life-centre of India is religion and religion alone. One cannot but be convinced of this when one witnesses a *Kumbha Mela* where millions of people of all ages, of all faiths, belonging to various sects, from all parts of the world, assemble without any special invitation. The last *Kumbha Mela* of the century — and being the last had its own special appeal — held during the summer of 1998 at Haridwar bears testimony to this fact. It is reported that about one crore people from all parts of the country — and many even from abroad — came to Haridwar covering long distances and undergoing great hardships just to have a holy dip in the sacred Ganges at the appointed hour, with the deep and abiding faith that they would thereby get themselves sanctified. Needless to say, it was a colossal affair. The Government of Uttar Pradesh sanctioned ninety-nine crore rupees to make special arrangements for the grand event.

The Kankhal Centre of the Ramakrishna Mission hosted about thirteen hundred pilgrims including 190 monks, and organized special programmes on this occasion such as: (i) an attractive theatrical performance based on the life of Sri Krishna, (ii) discourses by the Mandaleswaras from various Akharas and monks of the Ramakrishna Order, and (iii) devotional singing.

On 10 April, the topic for the public meeting was, 'Sri Ramakrishna and Advaita Vedanta'. Mahamandaleswar Swami Niranjananandaji Maharaj of Mahanirvani Akhara, speaking first, said that Sri Ramakrishna had realized Advaita in his life; that was why he could answer satisfactorily the question — 'Sir, have you seen God?' — of

young Narendranath, who later on became the world famous Swami Vivekananda and inspired the world with the lofty message of Vedanta. Mahamandaleswar Swami Premanandaji Maharaj of Mahanirvani Akhara said that the title 'Paramahansa' itself suggests that Sri Ramakrishna is himself the symbol of Advaita and, thus, to realize Sri Ramakrishna is to realize Advaita. Mahamandaleswar Swami Vishuddhanandaji Maharaj of Mahanirvani Akhara explained the difference between *mantra diksha*, *shaktipata* and *shambhavi diksha* for the realization of Advaita. Acharya Mahamandaleswar Swami Viswadevanandaji Maharaj of Mahanirvani Akhara in his Presidential Address said that Sri Ramakrishna did not start a new sect only because he was firmly established in Advaita.

The topic for discussion on 11 April was, 'Sri Ramakrishna and the Harmony of Religions'. The speakers were Mahamandaleswar Swami Maheshwaranandaji Maharaj, Mahamandaleswar Swami Akhandananda Sagarji Maharaj and Mahamandaleswar Swami Dayananda Veda-pathiji Maharaj. The meeting was presided over by Mahamandaleswar Swami Kashikanandaji Maharaj of Mahanirvani Akhara. All the speakers highlighted the importance of the life and message of Sri Ramakrishna in bringing about harmony among the followers of various religious faiths.

The topic for the public meeting on 12 April was, 'Practical Vedanta and Swami Vivekananda'. Acharya Mahamandaleswar Swami Shivendra Puriji Maharaj of Agni Akhara and Acharya Sri Sriji Maharaj of Nimbarka Sect in their speeches lauded the service activities conducted by the

Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission based on Practical Vedanta propounded by Swami Vivekananda. **Acharya Mahamandaleswar Swami Vidyananda Giri** of Kailas Ashram in his Presidential Address explained that unless one has realized the dictum of the *Shrutis* that Brahman pervades everything, that all that exists is verily Brahman (*sarvam khalvidam brahma*), one cannot really serve others with the spirit of worship of God in Man (*Śiva-jñāne jīva sevā*). However, this *seva* is important also from the point of view of *sadhana*.

The topic for discussion on 13 April was, 'Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi — The Personification of Knowledge'. **Mahamandaleswar Swami Gurusharananandaji Maharaj** of Udasi Akhara, **Swami Nikhilatmanandaji Maharaj**, Head of the Allahabad Centre of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, and **Swami Akamanandaji Maharaj** of Kankhal Sevashrama narrated appealing incidents from the life of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, and explained how Holy Mother gave spiritual knowledge

through *mantra diksha* to all, irrespective of their caste, religion or status in society, and how her unconditional grace descended on sinners and saints alike. **Srimat Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj**, a Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Order, in his Presidential Address beautifully brought out the relevance of the life and teachings of the Holy Mother for the devotees today.

Discourses on 'Ramcharitamanas' (in Hindi) by **Swami Nikhilatmanandaji Maharaj** on 10 and 11 April, and on 'The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna' (also in Hindi) by **Swami Vyomanandaji Maharaj** of Advaita Ashrama, Varanasi, on 12 and 13 April, in the mornings, were highly appreciated for the wealth of spiritual insight.

Srimat Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj, the senior Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Order, released on 8 April a souvenir brought out on the occasion, and inaugurated the out-patient department and the newly constructed hospital wing for female patients in the Kankhal Sevashrama Hospital on 14 April. □

Status of Women: A Gandhian View

(Continued from page 609)

male chauvinism and gender bias. The plethora of systems, i.e. social, economic, cultural and political, are each biased against women. Neither democratization nor the so-called women's liberation movements could address themselves to the real issues. Only through the humanization of the very process of development, considering women as an essential part of society, can this be done. There has been no conscious efforts to analyse the impact of the woman factor on the concept of development. Today, nature, society and the human body are all viewed as composed of interchangeable parts that can be repaired or re-

placed from outside. This mechanization of nature has led to the depersonalization of human nature. Gandhiji said that this state of affairs has been due to:

Politics without principles,
Science without humanity,
Wealth without work,
Commerce without morality, and
Pleasure without conscience.

The earlier corrective measures are taken, the better society will become. And in this process it is self-education that plays a vital role. □

Reviews and Notices

ASPECTS OF VEDANTA; publ. The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Calcutta 700 029; 1995; pp. 348; Rs. 100/-.

The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture had brought out a revised and enlarged edition of its encyclopaedic work the *Cultural Heritage of India* over a period of about two decades. The sixth of the intended eight volumes came out in 1986. Not many may now have either the inclination or the monetary resources to possess the set personally. The Institute of Culture has now commendably taken up the task of culling out from these volumes articles relevant to present day needs and brought out an anthology on Vedanta Philosophy, which forms the book under review.

The preface to the book is Swami Vivekananda's own lecture on the Vedanta Philosophy, reprinted from his *Complete Works* (vol. 1). The anthology consists of articles on Advaita Vedanta, Brahma-mimamsa and Vedanta as interpreted by Acharyas Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhva, Nimbarka, Vallabha and Sri Caitanya, as well as articles on the relationship of Buddhism to Vedanta.

All the Acharyas commented on the nature of the Absolute or Brahman, Its relationship with the *jiva* (individual self) and with the *jagat* (the world). That there are various interpretations of this only goes to show that Brahman is beyond words and description (*vācānagocāra* and *anirvacanīya*). Followers of Sri Sankara make it appear that the last word on this was said by him. This feeling is greater today when findings in theoretical physics are said to come very close to his observations. Moreover, there is a popular misunderstanding that the terms Vedanta and Sri Sankara's Advaita Vedanta are synonyms. Some of Sankara's statements, however, are amenable to varied interpretations and various philosophers including his own direct disciples have put forth different interpretations. These are discussed in the book under review in the chapter 'Post-Sankara Advaita'.

Sankara's interpretations that Brahman and the Atman are non-different and that the world as seen by us is apparent and not real (*Māyāvāda*) were not acceptable to all. Moreover, to an ordinary man to whom this world, along with its inhabitants, is very much real, the concept that all this is illusory would result in his being left with no tangible support. This could paradoxically lead him towards stark materialism or to nihil-

ism. To ward off such a possibility, there arose many schools of dualistic philosophy where Brahman and Atman are not always held to be identical and where the world as it appears is conceded to be real. These schools also affirm *Īśvara* (Brahman with attributes and form) known variously as Narayana, Hari or Sri Krishna. Sankara, on the other hand, maintained that Brahman is unconditioned and without attributes. The dualistic schools, in contrast to Sankara who considered *jñāna* as the path to liberation, have emphasized *bhakti*. These acharyas upheld the importance of the Purāṇas, particularly the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. The book, therefore, contains a scholarly article by Swami Tyagisananda on the philosophy propounded in that great book.

The dualistic schools hold that Brahman and the *jivas* are separate. While Ramanuja says that on liberation the *jiva* becomes one with Brahman, Madhva maintains that the separateness is eternal. According to him the *jiva* is always dependent (*paratantra*) on Brahman which alone is independent (*svatantra*). To Nimbarka, Brahman is the cause and the world is the effect. Vallabha brings in two aspects of the Absolute—Parabrahman, the highest entity, and Akṣara Brahman, a step lower than Parabrahman, from which comes into existence this world. Sri Caitanya is the chief proponent of the *bheda-abheda* school according to which there are differences between Brahman and Atman in certain aspects and no differences in certain other aspects. The dualistic schools have also variously commented on the powers of *Īśvara*, *śaraṇāgati* (self-surrender), various forms of devotion, and so on, which are all discussed in some detail in these different chapters.

Since the Buddha is said to have denied the supremacy of the Vedas, there exists a popular misconception that Buddhism is outside the realm of Sanatana Dharma (or Hinduism as it is called today). However, the Buddha denounced only the Karma Kāṇḍa portion; his teachings are based entirely on the Jñāna Kāṇḍa or the Upaniṣads. However, his *śūnya-vāda*, that the world is totally unreal, was too difficult of acceptance by the common man and so Buddhism faded away, near totally, from India, unable to withstand the more rationalistic philosophy of Sankara. These aspects are discussed in two chapters of the book.

To those who are not very familiar with Vedanta Philosophy, the very first chapter of the book, on Brahma-mimamsa, could be extremely daunting; they are advised to start with the lucid

article on 'Essentials of Vedanta' by V. Subrahmanya Iyer. Since selection is made from the six published volumes of *The Cultural Heritage of India*, references for each of the selected articles should have been provided. Readers would have benefited more if the Bibliography had an appendix of relevant works published after *The Cultural Heritage* was brought out. They should, specially, be made aware of Swami Tapasyananda's *Bhakti Schools of Vedanta*, which forms a valuable companion to the book under review. The print of the book does not measure upto the usual standards of the publications of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission.

Dr. Kamala S. Jaya Rao, Hyderabad

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: A STUDY; Sjt. Nabaniharan Mukhopadhyay, St. Tanulal Pal, Vice President, Akhil Bharat Vivekananda Yuva Mahamandal, 'Bhuban Bhavan', P.O. Balaram Dharma Sopan, Khardah, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal 734 121; 1997; pp. 130; Rs. 45/-.

This (1997) is the centenary year of Swami Vivekananda's triumphant return from the West. It was a great occasion for India then, in 1897, and is so in the year 1997. On disembarking in Colombo, Swamiji like a hurricane, travelled from Colombo to Almora and the entire nation woke up out of a deep slumber. The inspiration the people received, resulted in throwing out the colonial government and we emerged as a free nation. The story of the last fifty years is a story of gains and losses.

Failure of educational and other systems is obvious as we do not find enough men of integrity in our social and political life. In such a situation it is worthwhile to go back to Swami Vivekananda's works to draw sustenance for our march towards a better India.

The Yuva Mahamandal has produced this short book with a view to broadcast Swamiji's thoughts on various aspects of our national heritage. The material is presented here topically in twenty-seven brief chapters. When one comes towards the end, one begins to feel that Swami Vivekananda is still relevant today.

The author has ably drawn all powerful sayings and extracts of speeches and presented them in nutshells. These are easy for assimilation. The book indeed serves as a refresher course for those who have already read Swami Vivekananda in full or in parts. The book has a foreword by Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj, President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mis-

sion.

The book deserves a place on the study tables of young men and women and also on the shelves of school and college libraries.

Dr. Narendranath B. Patil, Mumbai

THE UPANIŠADS: AN INTRODUCTION, Swami Harshananda; publ. Sri Ramakrishna Math, Bull Temple Road, Bangalore, 560 019; 1997; pp. 50 + vi; Rs. 12/-.

In this informative and useful book, Swami Harshananda expounds the timeless truth of the *Upaniṣads* in a lucid and incisive manner. The *Upaniṣads* have inspired and sustained millions of people over the centuries. It has created a great tradition of spirituality '...not only by a fearless spirit of inquiry ... but also by intuitive mystical experiences beyond the ken of the intellect...' (p. 1). The *Upaniṣads* have influenced the religio-cultural life of other nations beyond India which include Japan, China and Korea in the East, and Central Asia in the West.

In this book Swami Harshananda traces the origin of the *Upaniṣads*, and then discusses the nature and content of the important *Upaniṣads* in a brief and condensed manner. Among the *Upaniṣads* discussed are *Aitareya Upaniṣad*, *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, *Īśāvāsyā Upaniṣad*, *Kātha Upaniṣad*, *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad*, *Jābhāla Upaniṣad*, *Kaivalya Upaniṣad*, *Kena Upaniṣad*, *Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad*, *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, *Mundaka Upaniṣad*, *Taittiriya Upaniṣad* and *Vajrasūcika Upaniṣad*.

The *Upaniṣads* contain the essence of Vedic religion and philosophy. It is the foundation of the *Śaṅkara* or the six systems of Indian philosophy. It is also one of the three foundational scriptures, the other two being the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Brahma-sūtras*.

The basic spiritual wisdom of the *Upaniṣads* relates to the achievement of *mokṣa* or spiritual liberation through contemplation or *Jñāna* (Knowledge) of the Atman.

The book begins with a Preface, and has thirteen chapters, which include a Conclusion. It provides the lay reader with a rewarding insight into the philosophic nature of the various *Upaniṣads*. The survey is general and comprehensive, though by no means exhaustive. The language used is clear and concise, and the arrangement of ideas, neat and logical. It is sure to provide the discerning reader with the right kind of impetus to pursue a detailed study of these great philosophical treatises.

Dr. Rama Nair, Secunderabad

News and Reports

Centenary Celebrations of the Ramakrishna Mission

The Central Committee for Ramakrishna Mission Centenary Celebrations, held a Sadhu Sammelan (Conference of monks belonging to different Hindu denominations) at the Kankhal Sevashrama on 8 April. A detailed report appears in this issue of the journal (see pp. 610-1).

The Delhi Centre held a public meeting which was presided over by Sri Krishan Kant, Vice-President of India, on 18 April. Revered Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj gave the benedictory address. (See page 580-2 in this issue.) Nearly 1000 persons attended the programme.

The Thrissur Math organized a huge procession with Swamiji's pictures, tableaux, band groups and decorated elephants on 7 March in which about 5000 persons took part. The public meeting held on the same day and a seminar on the following day were addressed by distinguished speakers. Prizes were distributed to the winners in the essay competitions held earlier.

The Ramharipur Centre conducted a colourful procession, a public meeting and a cultural programme on 20 March.

The Malda Centre held a public meeting on 28 April which was presided over by the General Secretary and addressed by several noted speakers.

The Pune Math held public meetings, Bhakta Sammelan and devotional music from 17 to 19 April. A one-day spiritual retreat and three lectures in Goa, and speeches in Satara, Bhadole, Ichalkaranji, Kolhapur and Belgaum were also organized.

The Bhubaneswar Centre conducted special worship, homa and discourses on 1 May.

The Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, held special programmes. Swami Nikhilatmananda, Head of the Allahabad Centre, gave a lecture on 'Swami Vivekananda, Regeneration of India and Ramakrishna Mission's Contribution' (in Hindi) in the Government Inter College at Lohaghat before senior students and teachers of the institution on 18 May 1998, and a *pravacan* (discourse in Hindi) on *Ramcharitmanas* for the benefit of the general public on 18 and 19 May 1998.

Relief Activity in Gujarat

Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Rajkot, launched an intense relief activity during 10-17 June 1998 in different parts of Gujarat devastated by cyclone. Dry-food packets were first distributed to 1700 people (on 10th) in Jamnagar and 1100 slum-dwellers (on 10th and 11th) in Porbandar. On subsequent days, large quantities of food

stuff, garments, utensils and other house-hold items were distributed as needed among 500 families in Kandla, 1000 families in Tuna (Adipur) and Adipur outskirts (6 kms. from Kandla), and the afflicted people of Kalyanpur and Khambalia in Jamnagar district and of Porbandar.

Purna Kumbha Mela

On the occasion of the Purna Kumbha Mela, the Kankhal Centre organized a camp at the Sevashrama premises from 9 to 15 April in which nearly 1300 pilgrims including 190 monastics were accommodated. A detailed report appears in this issue of the journal (see pp. 612-13).

Temple Dedication

At Malda Centre, Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj consecrated the newly built Sri Ramakrishna Temple on 29 April and released a souvenir brought out on the occasion. The public meeting held in the afternoon was presided over by Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj and addressed by Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj and several other distinguished persons. Distribution of clothes to 1500 poor and needy persons, school uniforms and stationery to 40 students, and prizes to the winners in different competitions held earlier formed part of the programme. A large number of devotees and 113 monastics from different centres of the Ramakrishna Order attended the function.

The newly built Sri Ramakrishna Temple at Kishanpur (Dehra Dun) was dedicated by Revered Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj on 11 May, Buddha Purnima day. Revered Maharaj inaugurated a permanent exhibition on the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement the following day. A detailed report of the function will appear in the November issue of this journal.

E-Mail

E-Mail facility has been installed at the Headquarters of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math, West Bengal. Its address is rkmathbm@cal.vsnl.net.in.

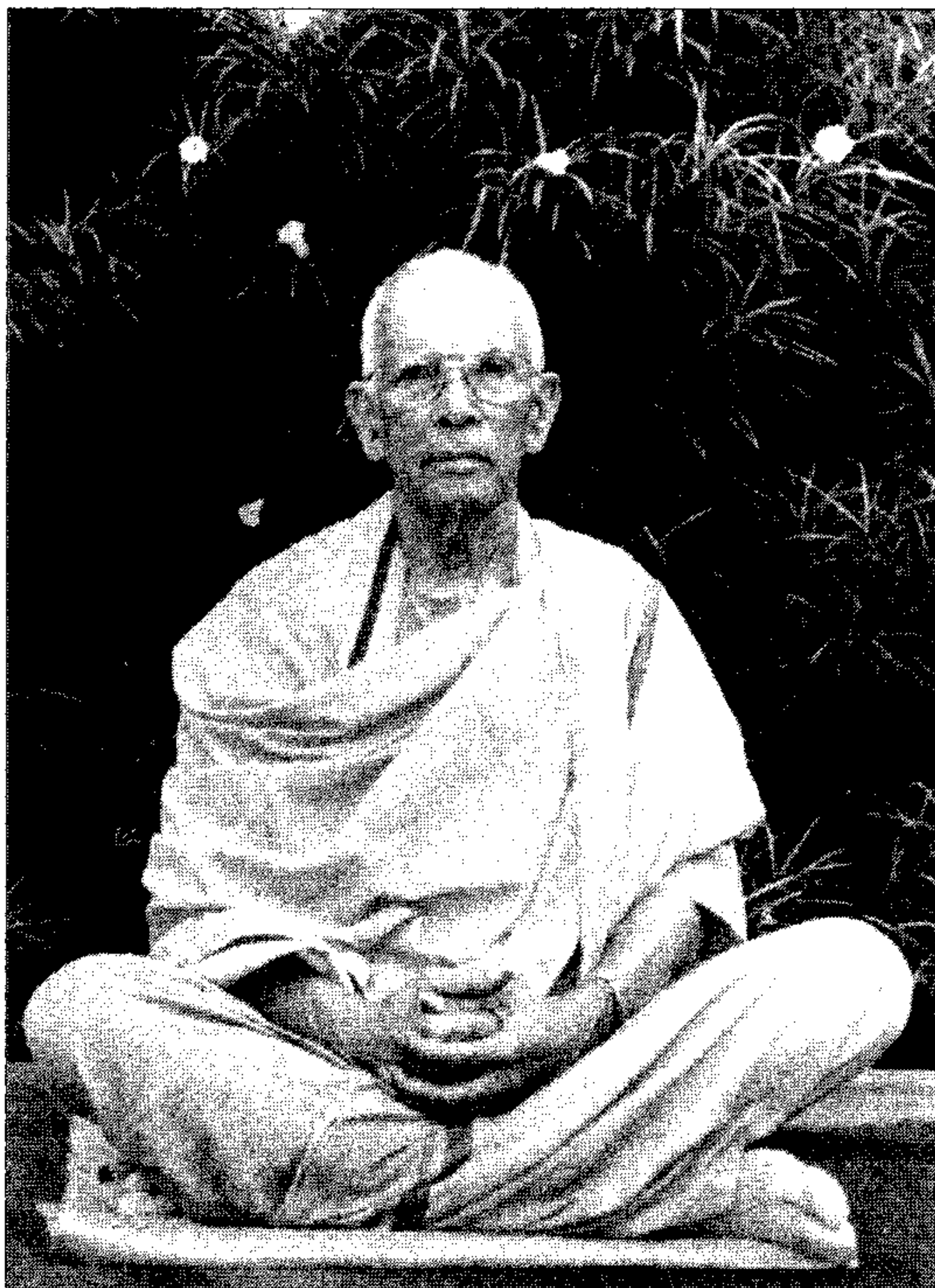
Sri Ramakrishna Bhandara at Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati

The annual mass-feeding programme was arranged on 31 May 1998 with (i) chanting from the Upanishads and the Gita led by Swamis Shivaprasadananda and others, (ii) Reading Devi Mahatmyam (Sri Sri Chandi) by Swami Sthiratmananda, (iii) hymns, chanting and devotional songs led by Swami Nirmohananda, and (iv) discourse by Swamis Rudratmanandaji, Parasharanandaji and Mumukshanandaji. About 500 people were sumptuously fed.

The New President of **The Ramakrishna Math & The Ramakrishna Mission**

It is with great pleasure that we announce that Srimat Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj was elected President of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission at a meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Ramakrishna Math and the Governing Body of the Ramakrishna Mission on Monday, 7 September 1998. Revered Maharaj was one of the Vice-Presidents of the Math and the Mission since April 1989 and succeeds Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj who entered *Mahasamadhi* on 10 August 1998.

Swami Ranganathanandaji (known as Shankaran in his early life) was born in 1908 in the village of Trikkur in Kerala. While still a young student, he began studying Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature and became deeply inspired by its ideals of renunciation and service. In 1926 he received initiation from Srimat Swami Shivanandaji Maharaj (popularly known as Mahapurush Maharaj), a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, at



Ootacamund, and then joined the Ramakrishna Order at its branch in Mysore. There he led the hard life of a *brahmacharin*, later a sannyasin for nine years, devoted to prayer, meditation, intense study and service which included cooking, dishwashing and the chores—all done in a spirit of divine worship.

During his last year at Mysore he began giving classes on ethical and spiritual life, which he continued doing later wherever he went. He was next sent to the Ramakrishna Math centre at Bangalore, where he worked among the youth. He received *brahmacharya* vows in 1929 and sannyasa vows in 1933, both from his guru, Swami Shivanandaji Maharaj, at Belur Math.

From 1939 to 1942 he was Secretary and Librarian at the Ramakrishna Mission centre at Rangoon, and from 1942 to 1948 he was Head of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission in Karachi (now in Pakistan). As Secretary of the New Delhi Centre (October 1949 – March 1962) he built a large library and auditorium, a university students' textbook library, and a temple dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna. From April 1962 to November 1967 he served as Secretary of the Ramakrishna

Mission Institute of Culture, in Calcutta, as well as Director of its School of Humanistic and Cultural Studies and editor of its monthly Bulletin. His Sunday lectures in Rangoon, Karachi, Delhi and Calcutta were attended by a cosmopolitan audience of between 500 and 1700 listeners of all types.

From 1973-93 Swami Ranganathanandaji was President of the Ramakrishna Math in Hyderabad, in Andhra Pradesh. There he founded on an eight acre campus donated by the Government of Andhra Pradesh the Vivekananda Institute of Education and Culture, the Vivekananda Health Centre, and built a temple to Sri Ramakrishna. He also organized rural development programmes in a number of villages in the state.

At the invitation of the Government of India, the revered Maharaj gave yearly talks to the trainees at the National Academy of Administration, first in Metcalfe House in New Delhi in 1956 and later in Mussorie, for many years and served as a member of the Indian National Commission for Co-operation with UNESCO during the years 1964-67. He has also gone on many round-the-world lecture tours, travelling to over fifty countries—including 17 European countries—like U.S.S.R., Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Poland, Cuba, Germany, Holland, the U.K., Afghanistan, Iran, the U.S.A., Canada, all but four South American countries, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, and Japan. On these tours he delivered lectures almost daily, tirelessly speaking to universities, colleges, schools, cultural institutions, clubs, and other groups, on spiritual and cultural topics. Many of these tours were sponsored by the Government of India.

Through the years, he has deeply studied the basic scriptures of Hinduism as well as eastern and western thought. He always keeps abreast of latest events, ideas and scientific discoveries. His lectures, therefore, are a wonderful blend of ancient and modern. They discuss challenging contemporary problems in the light of the eternal human values and the Vedantic concept of divinity of man. At the request of the universities of Calcutta, Kanpur, Guwahati, Bangalore and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Bombay, he delivered convocation addresses in these centres of learning. Appreciating his contribution towards national integration in all its myriad aspects and his 'noble role' as an 'integrator of mankind far and wide' he was awarded the first 'Indira Gandhi Award for National Integration' for the year 1985.

He has also done yeoman service in the humanitarian field throughout his life. Whether it was Bengal Famine of 1943 when he collected and sent 1240 tons of good rice to Bengal by ship and train, or the suffering of the people in 1947 in the aftermath of the partition or during the frequent calamities of floods, cyclone etc. in various parts of the country, he has always been in the forefront to help the Math and the Mission organize extensive relief and rehabilitation of the distressed.

In between his heavy speaking engagements, the Swami has also found time to do much writing. His publications include: *The Message of the Upanishads* (with an Appendix consisting of his correspondence on the book with Sir Julian Huxley); *Eternal Values for a Changing Society* (in four volumes); *A Pilgrim Looks at the World* (in two volumes); *Role and Responsibility of Teachers in Building Modern India*; *Children: Humanity's Greatest Assets*; *Women in the Modern Age*; *Divine Grace*; *The Indian Vision of God as Mother*; *Science and Religion*; *Practical Vedanta and the Science of Values*, and many other booklets. Many of the Swami's lectures are available on audio cassettes, including: 'The Srimad Bhagavatam'; 'Vivekacudamani'; 'The Santi Parva of the Mahabharata'; and 'The Mandukya Upanishad'.

Since 1961 the Swami has been one of the Trustees of the Ramakrishna Math and a member of the Governing Body of the Ramakrishna Mission. We now earnestly pray to the Lord for his long life and a happy period of spiritual ministration and guidance of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission.